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ABSTRACT

This annual report presents comprehensive findings about high school completion and non-completion in Texas public schools. It includes state summaries of the annual grades 7-12 dropout rate used in the accountability system and a new series of longitudinal high school completion/student status rates. The series includes four-year rates for graduates, recipients of General Educational Development certificates, and students who continue in school following their anticipated graduation date. Four-year dropout rates comprise the fourth component of the series. Also included are grade 9-12 and grade 7-12 attrition rates and results of Texas Education Agency (TEA) analyses of leaver data quality. In addition to statewide statistics, the report provides historical information about dropout policy in Texas and the evolution of the dropout definition used for accountability purposes. Common methods of measuring student progress through school are discussed, along with potential advantages and disadvantages associated with each measure. The report presents background information on TEA data collection, processing, and reporting and describes national requirements for dropout data. Finally, it summarizes reported reasons students drop out of school and outlines effective dropout prevention strategies. Eight appendixes present tables and data. (Contains 15 figures, 16 tables, and 30 references.) (SM)

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Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 1998-99

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Abstract. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) prepares an annual report on dropouts in Texas public schools. This report includes state summaries of the annual dropout rate used in the accountability system, along with state attrition rates. This year, it also introduces a series of longitudinal secondary school completion/student status rates.

Out of 1,773,117 students who attended Grades 7-12 in Texas public schools during the 1998-99 school year, 27,592 students, or 1.6 percent, were reported to have dropped out. The statewide annual dropout rate has held steady at 1.6 percent for the last three school years. Dropout rates for African American and Hispanic students remained above that for White students statewide. The statewide annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was 2.2 percent.

The new longitudinal secondary school series tracks a class of students over five to seven years, from the time they enter Grade 9 or Grade 7 until the fall following their anticipated graduation. Out of 238,280 students in the class of 1999 Grade 9 cohort, 79.5 percent graduated, 4.0 percent received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and 8.0 percent continued school the following school year. The four-year longitudinal dropout rate was 8.5 percent.

In addition to statewide statistics, the report provides historical information about dropout policy in Texas and the evolution of the dropout definition used for accountability purposes. Common methods of measuring student progress through school are discussed, along with potential advantages and disadvantages associated with each measure. Extensive background on TEA data collection, processing, and reporting is presented, and national requirements for dropout data are described. Finally, the report summarizes reported reasons students drop out of school and outlines effective dropout prevention strategies.

Keywords. *Secondary education, high school completion, dropouts, annual dropout rate, longitudinal dropout rate, completion rate, graduation rate, attrition rate, Grades 7-12, Grades 9-12.*

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Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas
January 2001

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Highlights

Annual Dropout Rates

- Out of 1,773,117 students who attended Grades 7-12 in Texas public schools during the 1998-99 school year, 27,592 students, or 1.6 percent, were reported to have dropped out.
- When the leaver record was introduced in 1997-98, the number of dropouts increased for the first time in nine years, from 26,901 in 1996-97 to 27,550. In 1998-99, the number of dropouts again increased, from 27,550 to 27,592.
- The statewide annual dropout rate has held steady at 1.6 percent for the last three school years. Although the number of dropouts has risen somewhat since 1996-97, these increases have been more than offset by increased enrollment.
- The largest number of students (7,659) dropped out of Grade 9. Grade 12 had the highest dropout rate (2.9%).
- Dropout rates for African American and Hispanic students (2.3%) were nearly three times as high as that for White students (0.8%).
- The dropout rate for African American students increased from 2.1 percent to 2.3 percent between 1997-98 and 1998-99. The dropout rate for Hispanic students (2.3%) was unchanged from the year before, and the rate for White students decreased by a 10th of a percentage point to 0.8 percent.
- The statewide annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was 2.2 percent. Using a grade span of 7-12, rather than 9-12, increased the number of dropouts by 2,706 and decreased the dropout rate by 0.6 percentage points.
- Reasons cited for dropping out of school included poor attendance, pursuit of a job, and age.

Longitudinal Rates

- Out of 238,280 students in the 1995-96 Grade 9 cohort, 83.5 percent either graduated or received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate by 1999. An additional 8.0 percent continued in school the following school year.
- The longitudinal dropout rate of 8.5 percent represented a decrease from the 8.9 percent longitudinal dropout rate for the class of 1998 Grade 9 cohort.
- White students had a graduation rate of 86.2 percent, whereas African American students and Hispanic students had graduation rates of 74.7 percent and 70.6 percent, respectively. The graduation rates of all student groups showed improvement between 1998 and 1999.
- Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students had the highest longitudinal dropout rates, with each group at 13.1 percent. Dropout rates for Hispanic and White students decreased by 0.3 and 0.6 percentage points, respectively, between the classes of 1998 and 1999. The dropout rate for African American students was steady, at 11.6 percent.
- Females had a higher graduation rate than males and lower rates of GED certification, continuation, and dropping out.
- The Grade 7 cohorts for the classes of 1998 and 1999 demonstrated patterns similar to those for the Grade 9 cohorts. The graduation rate increased from 76.8 percent to 78.1 percent, while the rates of dropping out, GED certification, and continuation all decreased. The dropout rate for the class of 1999 Grade 7 cohort decreased from 9.8 percent to 9.0 percent.

- For 1999, the attrition rates for Grades 9-12 and Grades 7-12 were 36.6 percent and 25.7 percent, respectively.

Leaver Reporting

- Statewide, districts accounted for 98.9 percent (or 1,847,025 students) of the students who were enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99.
- Only 21,432 (or 1.1%) of the students in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99 were underreported.
- 1998-99 was the second year the leaver record was used, and reporting improved significantly over 1997-98. In 1998-99, there were only 21,432 underreported student records, compared to 67,281 underreported student records in 1997-98.
- On a percentage basis, students enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 who had not been accounted for dropped to 1.1 percent from 3.6 percent in 1997-98.
- For 1998-99, no district had more than 1,000 underreported student records, and only 55 had more than 10 percent underreported student records. For 1997-98, nine districts had more than 1,000 underreported student records, and 103 districts failed to account for more than 10 percent of students enrolled.
- The number of districts that accounted for all students (i.e., had no underreported students) increased more than four-fold, from 79 in 1997-98 to 317 in 1998-99.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, major changes in economic and social circumstances have heightened public concern about educational excellence and equity. Rapid advances in technology and the emergence of a global marketplace have steadily diminished the labor market opportunities available to young people with little education or training. At the same time, youths traditionally considered most at risk of academic failure have comprised increasingly larger proportions of the Texas school-age population.

In response to these challenges, Texas has moved from a public education system that focuses on rules and procedures to one that emphasizes student achievement and accountability for results. School districts and campuses are now held responsible for enabling *all students* to achieve exemplary levels of performance. Lawmakers have facilitated school improvement by reducing state regulations and giving educators the flexibility to tailor programs to meet local needs.

Sophisticated data systems allow the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to monitor school performance using a wide range of measures. Common indicators of academic excellence include attendance, advanced course completion, and standardized test results. Individually, each indicator concentrates on a unique aspect of performance; together, they present a broader picture of overall educational quality and effectiveness.

One of the most fundamental measures of school success is whether students are completing their secondary education. Over time, refinements in data collection and processing have allowed TEA to provide increasingly more detailed information about high school completion. Student progress through high school can now be measured using a variety of methods and rates. Each type of rate is valid and useful for its specific purpose and can offer a reliable assessment of the educational experience it was designed to measure.

This report, published annually since 1989, takes advantage of these expanded resources by presenting comprehensive findings about both high school completion and non-completion. As in years past, the report includes state summaries of the annual Grade 7-12 dropout rate used in the accountability system. This year, in addition, a new series of longitudinal high school completion/student status rates is introduced. The series includes four-year rates for graduates, recipients of General Educational Development (GED) certificates, and students who continue in school following their anticipated graduation date. Four-year dropout rates make up the fourth component of the series. Together, the rates add to 100 percent. Also presented this year are Grade 9-12 and Grade 7-12 attrition rates.

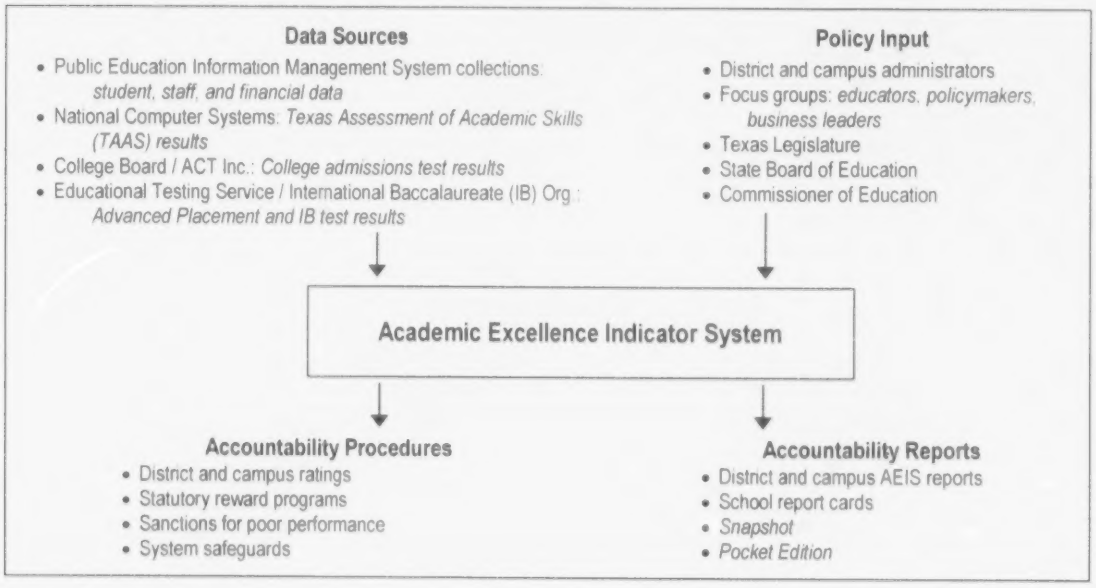
The Texas Education Agency continues to take steps to improve the accuracy of dropout reporting. In 1998, the separate dropout and graduate data records submitted by school districts were eliminated and replaced with a leaver data record. Districts are now required to account for each student enrolled in Grades 7-12, not just dropouts and graduates. This more complete set of student withdrawal information can be better monitored at the state level. Results of TEA analyses of leaver data quality are presented in this year's report.

In addition to statewide statistics, the report provides historical information about dropout policy in Texas and the evolution of the dropout definition used for accountability purposes. Common methods of measuring student progress through school are discussed, along with potential advantages and disadvantages associated with each measure. Extensive background on TEA data collection, processing, and reporting is presented, and national requirements for dropout data are described. Finally, the report summarizes reported reasons students drop out of school and outlines effective dropout prevention strategies.

State Accountability System

The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) serves as the basis of an integrated accountability system that includes a mechanism for rating campuses and school districts, as well as for reporting performance results to districts, schools, and parents. As Figure 1 illustrates, data collected from school districts through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) or provided by test contractors are compiled for each school year. These AEIS data are the primary source for accountability evaluations and reports.

Figure 1.
Overview of Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)


Data Sources
• Public Education Information Management System collections: student, staff, and financial data
• National Computer Systems: Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) results
• College Board / ACT Inc.: College admissions test results
• Educational Testing Service / International Baccalaureate (IB) Org.: Advanced Placement and IB test results
Policy Input
• District and campus administrators
• Focus groups: educators, policymakers, business leaders
• Texas Legislature
• State Board of Education
• Commissioner of Education
Academic Excellence Indicator System
Accountability Procedures
• District and campus ratings
• Statutory reward programs
• Sanctions for poor performance
• System safeguards
Accountability Reports
• District and campus AEIS reports
• School report cards
• Snapshot
• Pocket Edition

Published beginning with the 1990-91 school year, AEIS reports include performance indicators designed to measure the educational progress of campuses and districts. Since 1994, the accountability system has distinguished between three types of performance indicators: base, additional, and report-only. (For a detailed description of components of the AEIS, see the TEA *Accountability Manual* [cf. TEA, 2000a].) From 1994 to 2000, the base indicators were defined as the attendance rate for Grades 1-12, the annual dropout rate for Grades 7-12, and performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). These are used to determine district and campus performance ratings. The TAAS and dropout indicators are evaluated for individual student groups (African American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged), as well as for all students.

Additional indicators (such as college admissions testing results and participation in the State Board of Education's recommended high school program) although measured against standards, do not affect accountability ratings. Instead, districts and campuses may receive acknowledgment for high levels of performance on these indicators. Report-only indicators (such as Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate test results and advanced course completion) are included in AEIS reports, but state standards for these indicators are not set. The AEIS reports also include school district profile data, such as student and teacher demographic information, that provide a context for interpreting the performance data. There

are four standard ratings for districts and campuses: *Exemplary*, *Recognized*, *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable*, and *Academically Unacceptable / Low-Performing*. Other labels can be applied in special circumstances outside the standard rating procedures.

Typically, when a new base or additional indicator is added to the AEIS, it is phased in over three years. In the first year, data are collected and reported to establish benchmarks, which are then used to set standards for the future. For the next two years, the data are reported back to school districts and campuses to provide opportunities for familiarization with the indicator, for data collection refinements that may need to occur, and for advance local planning. In the fourth year, the indicator is used for ratings or acknowledgment.

Standards for performance on the base indicators are also phased in over time. Table 1 shows past and future changes to the dropout rate standards in the accountability system. In 1994, annual Grade 7-12 dropout rates for the 1992-93 school year were used for *Exemplary* and *Recognized* ratings only. A dropout rate of 1 percent or less was required for a rating of *Exemplary*, and a rate of 3.5 percent or less was required for a rating of *Recognized*. In 1995, TEA began using annual dropout rates for all ratings categories. A dropout rate standard of 6.0 percent or less was established for a district rating of *Accredited* (now called *Academically Acceptable*) or a campus rating of *Acceptable*. More rigorous dropout standards are planned for the future. In 2001, and again in 2002, the maximum dropout rate allowed for a rating of *Recognized* or *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable* will be lowered by 0.5 percentage points. In 2004, longitudinal secondary school completion/student status rates will be incorporated in the accountability ratings.

Table 1.
Dropout Rate Standards in the
Texas Public Education Accountability System, 1994-2002

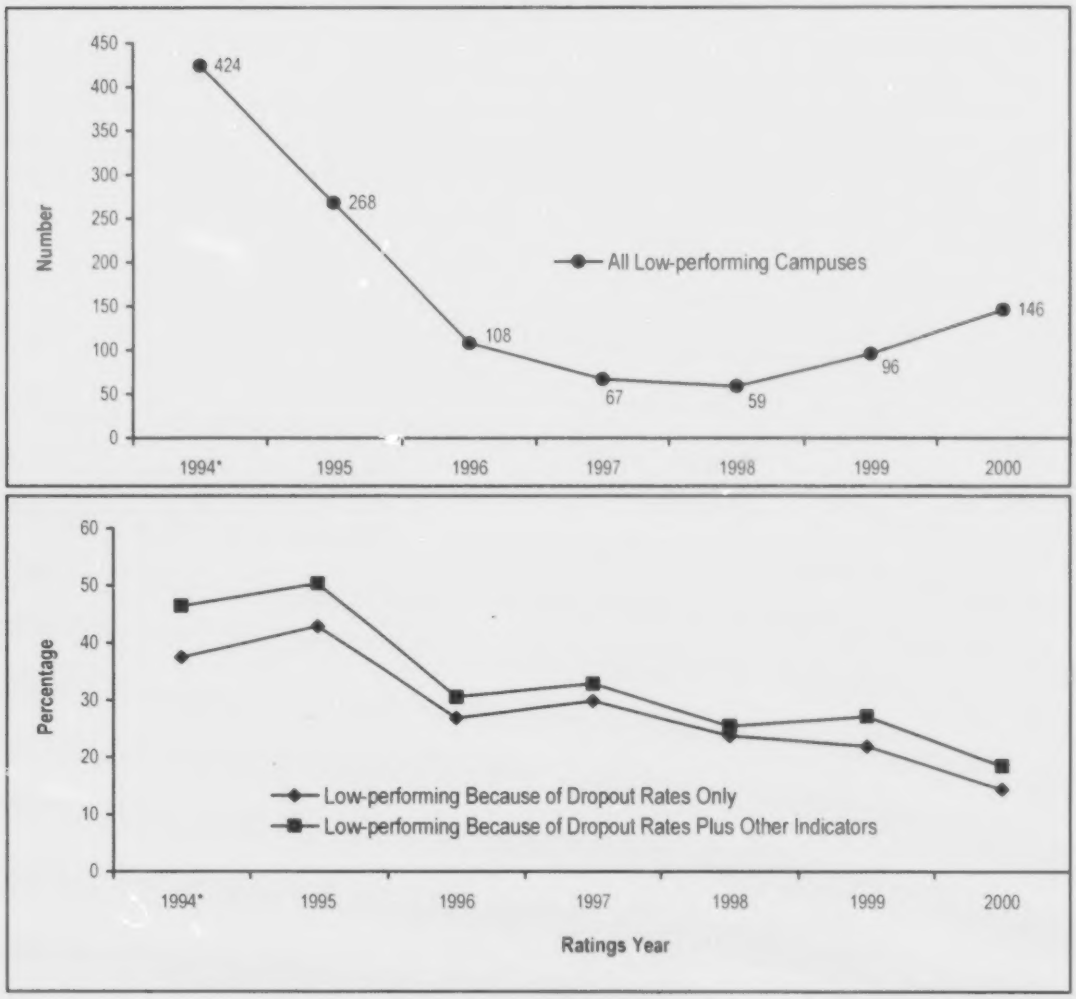
	1994	1995-2000	2001	2002
Dropout Rate Standards, Grades 7-12 ***(for all students and each student group)***				
Exemplary	<=1.0%	<=1.0%	<=1.0%	<=1.0%
Recognized	<=3.5%	<=3.5%	<=3.0%	<=2.5%
Academically Acceptable[a] / Acceptable	n/a	<=6.0%	<=5.5%	<=5.0%
Academically Unacceptable[a] / Low-performing	n/a	>6.0%[b]	>5.5%	>5.0%

Note. Student groups are: African American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged.

[a]For 1994 through 1996, the district ratings used were: *Exemplary*, *Recognized*, *Accredited*, and *Accredited Warned*. A statutory change in 1997 resulted in use of the current rating labels. [b]Special conditions for a single dropout rate exceeding the *Acceptable* standard apply.

Since a dropout indicator was incorporated in the accountability system in 1994, the percentage of campuses rated *Low-performing* because of dropout rates has generally declined (see Figure 2). Of the 146 campuses statewide rated *Low-performing* in 2000, 27 campuses (18.5%) had a dropout rate greater than 6.0 percent. The number of campuses rated *Low-performing* because of dropout rates decreased from 135 in 1995 to a low of 15 in 1998. In 2000, the number increased to 27.

Figure 2.
***Low-performing* Campuses Attributable to Dropout Rates,**
Texas Public Schools, 1994-2000



	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Dropout Rates Only, %	37.5	42.9	26.9	29.9	23.7	21.9	14.4
Dropout Rates + Other Indicators, %	46.5	50.4	30.6	32.8	25.4	27.1	18.5

*1995 *Low-performing* standards applied to 1994 campus data.

Monitoring Student Progress

History of Data Collection

In 1984, when education reform in Texas began to focus on accountability for student performance, TEA collected a wide variety of school district information using some 200 separate paper forms. These aggregated data provided educators, policymakers, and the public with a broad sense of the direction of public education in the state. Nevertheless, because data collection and reporting procedures were not standardized, there were inconsistencies across districts in definitions, calculations, and reports. This limited the usefulness of the student data for detailed evaluation of campus and district performance trends.

When the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 72 in the summer of 1984, it became necessary to develop a comprehensive, coordinated database of public education information. The system had to allow student performance and progress to be measured accurately, evaluated fairly, and reported publicly in a timely manner. After two years of development, the State Board of Education (SBOE) in 1986 approved implementation of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

The first PEIMS data collection took place in the fall of 1987. Districts were responsible for reporting organizational, financial, and staff information. The following year, dropout records became the first individual student data records submitted through PEIMS. A Person Identification Database (PID) system was implemented shortly thereafter, ensuring that each time data were collected for the same individual, certain pieces of basic identifying information matched. With student-level data and a system for linking student records, TEA could produce automated aggregations of campus-, district-, and state-level information.

In 1990-91, districts began submitting student-level enrollment and graduation records. This information, combined with the dropout record, enabled TEA to look at different statuses attained by students on an annual basis. It also became possible for the first time to consider tracking student progress across multiple years. As PEIMS continued to evolve, refinements in data collection, processing, and reporting helped meet the growing demand for reliable information about public education. The desire for a more comprehensive and accurate accounting of reported student outcomes led to a major change in data submission requirements in 1998-99. Currently, there are four data collections per school year, each with submission and resubmission deadlines.

Leaver Reporting System

Reporting Requirements

Before the 1997-98 school year, districts were only required to report students in Grades 7-12 who graduated or dropped out. The status of students who left school for any other reason was not reported through PEIMS. Since fall of 1998, however, school districts have had to report the status of all students who were enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 the previous year. Returning students are reported on the enrollment record; students who left during the previous year or did not return are reported on the "leaver record." Using the leaver record, districts now report up to three of 41 leaver reason codes to describe the circumstances of a student's departure.

Based on the leaver reason codes, school leavers are categorized as graduates, dropouts, or other leavers. Other leavers include students who withdraw: to enroll in other public or private schools in the state; to enroll in schools outside the state; to enroll in colleges or GED preparation programs; or to enter home schooling. See Appendix A for the number of students reported under each leaver reason code for the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years.

Accountability Safeguards

Leaver data represent a more complete set of student withdrawal information that can be better monitored at the state level. After initial processing of district data submissions is complete, data used to rate districts and campuses undergo routine screening before and after release of the accountability ratings to validate data integrity. To determine whether districts have accounted for all students, TEA compares a roster of all students enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 to leaver records and enrollment records submitted the following fall. Students on a district roster who have not been accounted for are considered underreported. Underreporting by school districts may be due to inadequate tracking or accounting, errors in the identification information used to match student records, or misunderstanding of reporting requirements.

For 1997-98, data inquiries initiated by the agency focused on underreported students. For 1998-99, a comprehensive desk audit of leaver reporting was implemented as part of the standard accountability system safeguards. A combination of broad analyses of leaver data quality and analyses of specific leaver reason codes is currently used to identify districts with underreported students and leavers likely reported with an incorrect leaver reason code. For example, TEA can search enrollment records to determine if students reported as leaving with the intent to enroll in another Texas public school district actually enrolled elsewhere. In addition, leaver reporting patterns in a district can be compared from year to year, as well as to reporting patterns of other districts in the region. TEA has the ability to identify school districts that show a dramatic increase in students moving out of state or that report many more students moving out of state than reported by neighboring districts.

School districts with serious and systematic data reporting problems are subject to investigation. Districts investigated for data quality are automatically subject to examination the following year to determine whether problems persist. A district with data problems is first contacted by telephone and letter. If questions remain, an investigation team visits the district to examine documentation.

Policymakers are currently focusing on the number of underreported students as a measure of the accuracy of leaver reporting. In 1999-00, TEA gave districts a list of potential underreported students in their initial fall data submissions. Districts then had the opportunity to correct errors and omissions before the resubmission deadline. The corrections removed many students who had been on the preliminary lists of underreported student records. Following resubmission, additional processing was done to finalize the list of underreported students.

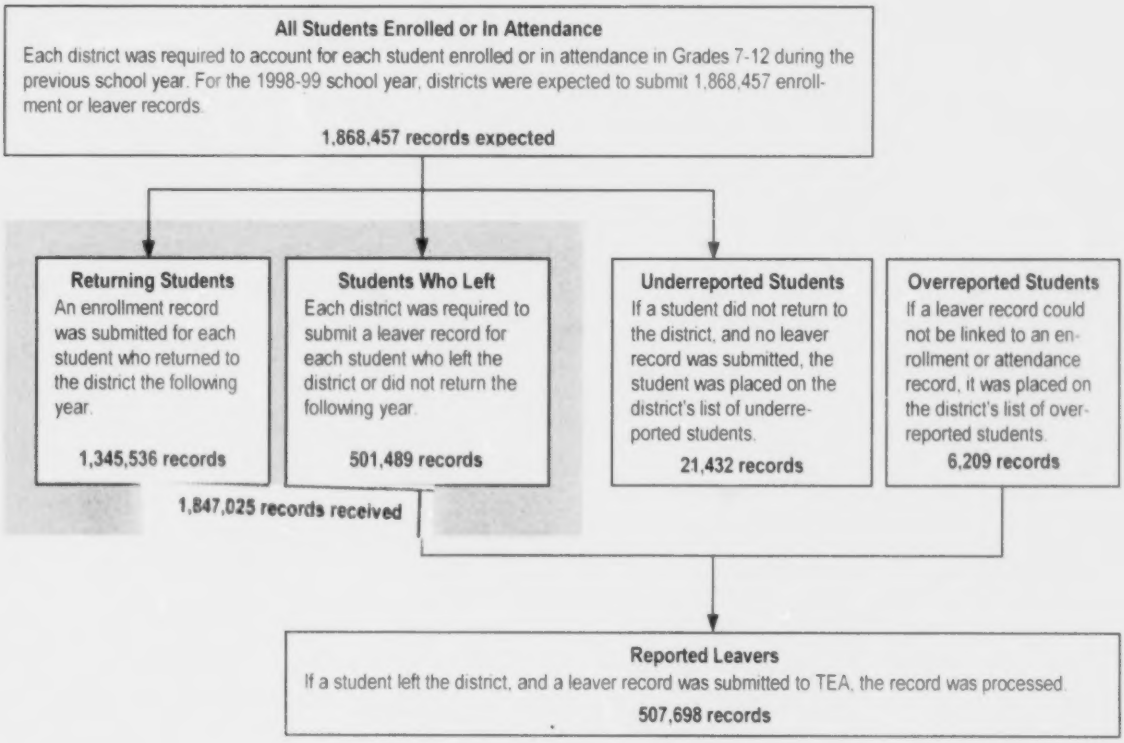
Overview of Leaver Data Processing

PEIMS data, including leaver records, are submitted to TEA through the regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), which are responsible for ensuring compliance with basic reporting requirements and schedules. Data checks are performed at TEA as part of initial data processing. Districts receive a list of potential underreported students – those Grade 7-12 students served the previous year for whom the district has not submitted either an enrollment record (for returning students) or a leaver record (for graduates, dropouts, and other leavers). Districts have one opportunity to correct and resubmit their data before the resubmission deadline. The due date for the fall data submission that includes the leaver data is early December. The resubmission deadline is mid-January.

After TEA receives the final PEIMS data submission, an automated statewide search of other data files is conducted. The search identifies students reported to have dropped out or withdrawn who did not do so. This includes students who are found enrolled in public school somewhere else in the state, students appearing on the GED information file as having received a GED certificate, students reported as having graduated, and any students who have been identified as a dropout in previous school years.

(continued on next page)

Figure 3.
Year-to-Year Reporting of Students in Grades 7-12, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99 (Phase I)


All Students Enrolled or In Attendance
Each district was required to account for each student enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 during the previous school year. For the 1998-99 school year, districts were expected to submit 1,868,457 enrollment or leaver records.
1,868,457 records expected
Returning Students
An enrollment record was submitted for each student who returned to the district the following year.
1,345,536 records
Students Who Left
Each district was required to submit a leaver record for each student who left the district or did not return the following year.
501,489 records
1,847,025 records received
Underreported Students
If a student did not return to the district, and no leaver record was submitted, the student was placed on the district's list of underreported students.
21,432 records
Overreported Students
If a leaver record could not be linked to an enrollment or attendance record, it was placed on the district's list of overreported students.
6,209 records
Reported Leavers
If a student left the district, and a leaver record was submitted to TEA, the record was processed.
507,698 records

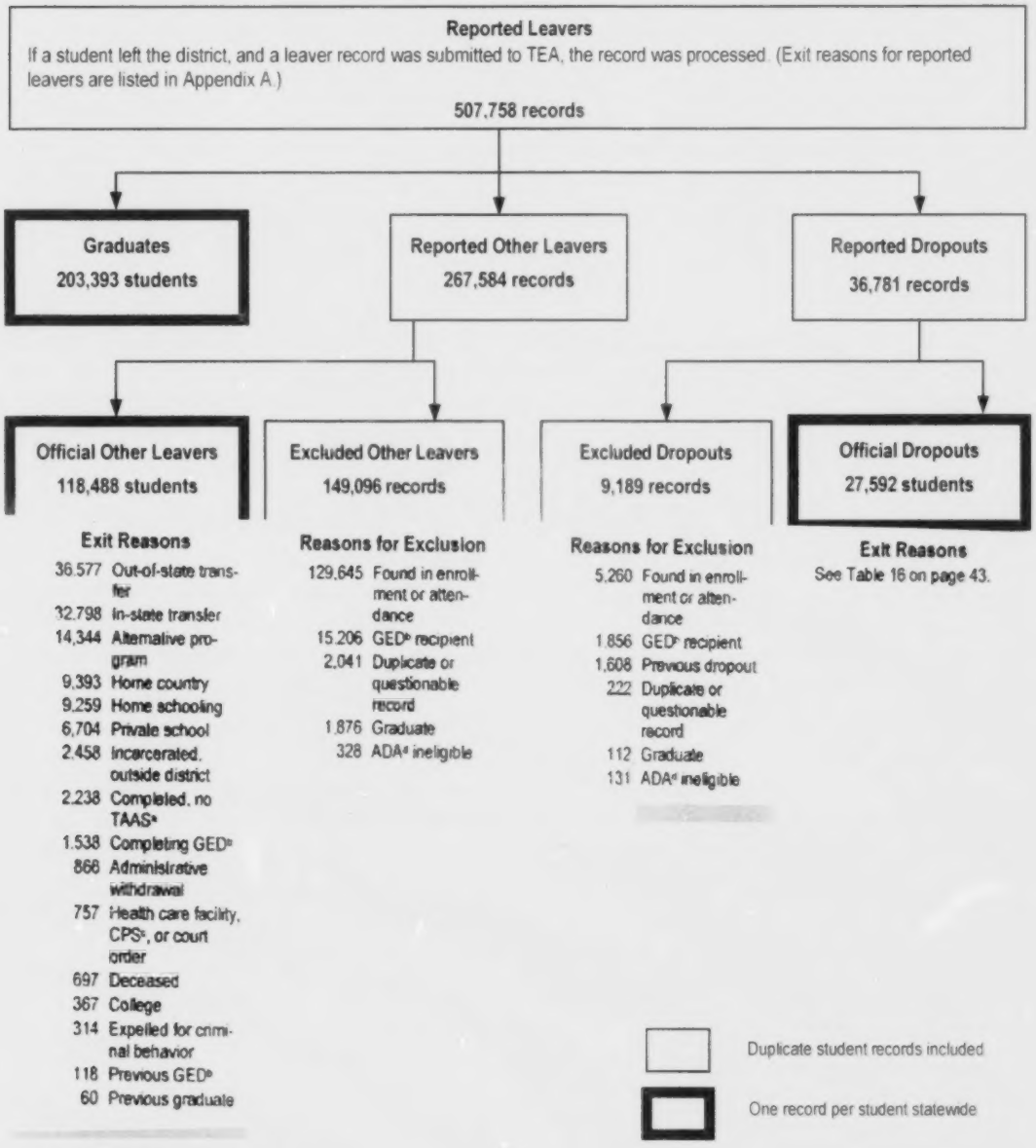
TEA screens district data to ensure that districts have accounted for all students who attended Grades 7-12. There must be one record per student per district attended. A student who attends more than one district during the school year is included in the count for each district attended. The totals shown here exclude student records from districts that report no fall enrollment.

Overview of Leaver Data Processing (cont.)

Once this process is completed, TEA calculates the annual dropout rate for each campus and district with Grade 7-12 enrollment, for all students and for each student group (African American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged). These rates, together with TAAS scores and attendance rates, serve as academic excellence indicators and are used to determine for each district and campus an accountability rating of either *Exemplary*, *Recognized*, *Academically Acceptable / Acceptable*, or *Academically Unacceptable / Low-performing*. The agency also calculates longitudinal completion/student status rates to meet legislative reporting requirements and public information needs.

Following release of the ratings each year, the commissioner of education convenes an accountability advisory group of educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to review issues that arose during the current-year rating cycle and changes proposed for the following year. As necessary, focus groups of educators are appointed to study issues and bring recommendations to the advisory group. Changes to the dropout definition and calculation of the annual dropout rate, as well as leaver data quality issues that have emerged since the inception of the accountability system, have been reviewed by the accountability advisory group. The accountability dropout definition and use of a completion rate in the accountability rating system will be among the topics addressed by a focus group to be appointed in summer 2001 to study issues related to the dropout indicator.

Figure 4.
Year-to-Year Reporting of Students in Grades 7-12, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99 (Phase II)



Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
General Educational Development certificate
Child Protective Services
Average Daily Attendance

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Leaver processing determines whether a student is a leaver, and if so, whether the student is a graduate, official dropout for accountability purposes, or an official other leaver. Each student can have only one record statewide as either a graduate, official dropout, or official other leaver. The totals shown here include student records from all districts.

Table 2.
Year-to-Year Reporting of Students in Grades 7-12,
Texas Public Schools, 1997-98 and 1998-99

	1997-98	1998-99
Returning Students	1,325,546	1,345,536
Graduates	197,186	203,393
Official Other Leavers	114,421	118,488
Excluded Other Leavers	122,980	149,096
Official Dropouts	27,550	27,592
Excluded Dropouts	10,312	9,189
Underreported Students	67,281	21,432

Results of PEIMS Leaver Collections

Underreported Students

Statewide, districts accounted for 98.9 percent (or 1,847,025 students) of the students who were enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99 (see Figure 3 on page 9). Only 1.1 percent (or 21,432) of the students in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99 were underreported.

1998-99 was the second year the leaver record was used, and reporting improved significantly over 1997-98. In 1998-99, there were only 21,432 underreported student records, compared to 67,281 underreported student records in 1997-98 (see Table 2). On a percentage basis, students enrolled or in attendance in Grades 7-12 who had not been accounted for dropped to 1.1 percent from 3.6 percent in 1997-98. Overall, the improvements in leaver reporting seem to have resulted from more accurate student identification and better reporting of students transferring to other Texas public school districts.

For 1998-99, no district had more than 1,000 underreported student records, and only 55 had more than 10 percent underreported student records. For 1997-98, nine districts had more than 1,000 underreported student records, and 103 districts failed to account for more than 10 percent of students enrolled.

Table 3.
Reported and Underreported Student Records in Grades 7-12,
by Ethnicity, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Records Received[a]		Underreported Records	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
African American	262,020	14.1	4,556	21.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	48,529	2.6	711	3.3
Hispanic	668,196	36.1	7,410	34.6
Native American	5,436	0.3	295	1.4
White	869,053	46.9	8,460	39.5
All Students	1,853,234	100	21,432	100

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

[a]Students enrolled in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99 for whom districts submitted either an enrollment record the next fall or a leaver record.

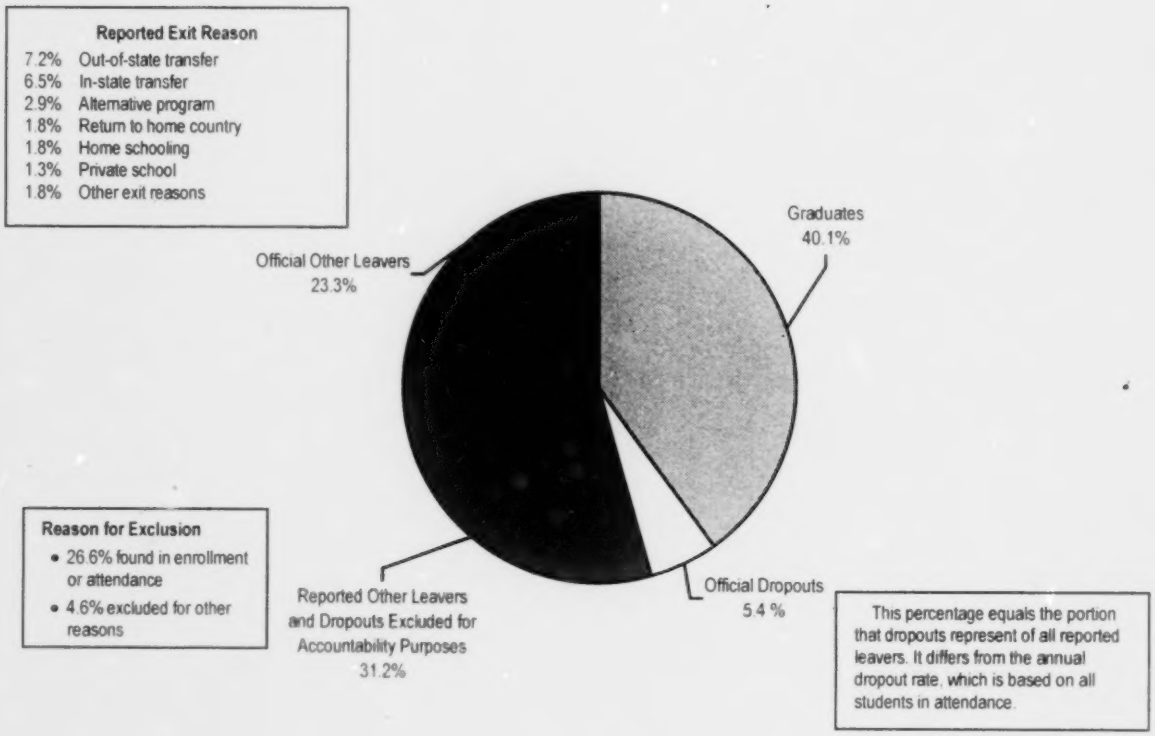
The number of districts that accounted for all students (i.e., had no underreported students) increased more than four-fold, from 79 in 1997-98 to 317 in 1998-99.

White and Hispanic students accounted for the largest numbers of enrollment and leaver records combined, as well as the largest numbers of underreported records (see Table 3 on page 11). African American students were overrepresented among underreported students; they constituted 14.1 percent of the students on the roster, but 21.3 percent of the underreported student records.

School Leavers Reported by Districts

Of the 507,758 students who were reported to have left school in 1998-99, 40.1 percent (203,393) were graduates (see Figure 4 on page 10 and Figure 5). Just over 25 percent moved to other districts in the state. A total of 27,592 (5.4 percent) dropped out, and 118,488 (23.3%) left the Texas public school system for reasons other than dropout reasons. See Appendix B for a comparison of 1997-98 and 1998-99 leaver results after TEA data processing.

Figure 5.
School Leavers Reported by Districts, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99


Reported Exit Reason
7.2% Out-of-state transfer
6.5% In-state transfer
2.9% Alternative program
1.8% Return to home country
1.8% Home schooling
1.3% Private school
1.8% Other exit reasons
Graduates
40.1%
Official Other Leavers
23.3%
Official Dropouts
5.4 %
Reported Other Leavers and Dropouts Excluded for Accountability Purposes
31.2%
Reason for Exclusion
• 26.6% found in enrollment or attendance
• 4.6% excluded for other reasons
This percentage equals the portion that dropouts represent of all reported leavers. It differs from the annual dropout rate, which is based on all students in attendance.

Consequences of Inaccurate Reporting

In 1999, following analysis of the first leaver data collection, new accountability ratings were created for districts and campuses with serious and systematic data reporting problems. The new district rating (*Unacceptable: Data Quality*) and new campus rating (*Acceptable: Data Issues*) were assigned when er-

rors in the leaver data seriously compromised the ability of TEA to calculate dropout rates and, thus, determine an accurate performance evaluation. Initially, two districts and 32 campuses were assigned the new ratings. A number of ratings were changed as a result of investigations conducted following release of the ratings. When 1999 ratings were finalized, four districts received the *Unacceptable: Data Quality* rating due to errors in leaver data, and 36 campuses received the *Acceptable: Data Issues* rating.

Accountability ratings for districts with leaver data problems were handled differently in 2000. Districts that exceeded a threshold for either the number or percentage of underreported students in Grades 7-12 could not be rated higher than *Academically Acceptable* in 2000. The thresholds were 1,000 or more underreported students or 10 percent or more underreported students. (Lower thresholds could trigger data inquiries but not immediate rating consequences.) The new label for the district rating assigned because of poor data quality is *Suspended: Data Inquiry*. The district rating is in effect until an agency investigation determines an appropriate performance-based rating. If the commissioner assigns a district rating of *Suspended: Data Inquiry*, then campuses affected by the data in question will also be rated *Suspended: Data Inquiry* until an agency investigation determines otherwise. No districts or campuses received the *Suspended: Data Inquiry* ratings in 2000. However, nine districts that would otherwise have been rated *Recognized* or *Exemplary* received *Academically Acceptable* ratings in 2000 due to large percentages of underreported students.

PEIMS Resources

Districts have been provided with a number of tools to assist them in reducing data errors before and during data submission. Published annually by TEA, the *PEIMS Data Standards* provide detailed reporting requirements, data element definitions, and TEA contact information. Question and answer documents produced periodically are distributed to every school district and ESC and made available on the TEA website.

The leaver reason code table in the *1999-00 PEIMS Data Standards* (TEA, 1999) included 41 leaver reason codes to identify why students left school. The high number of calls received from district and ESC PEIMS coordinators during the 1999-00 fall data submission period demonstrated that distinctions between the leaver reason codes were not always clear. For this reason, an expanded leaver reason code table with a definition/clarification for each code was added to the *2000-01 PEIMS Data Standards* (TEA, 2000c) (see Appendix C). Work has begun on a revised leaver reason code table with fewer codes organized into broad categories. The earliest that districts could make the changes needed to implement a new code table would be for the 2002-03 PEIMS data submission.

The *PEIMS Data Standards* require that districts have documentation to support the assigned leaver reason code. Questions about use of specific leaver reason codes are often related to questions about the documentation requirements for the code. To assist districts in meeting these requirements, specific documentation standards for each leaver reason code were prepared as an addendum to the *2000-01 PEIMS Data Standards* (see Appendix C).

PEIMS coordinators in each ESC serve as consultants to the school districts in preparing their data submissions, as well as providing training and technical assistance. At the request of ESC PEIMS coordinators, TEA staff conduct workshops for district and ESC staff who work with the PEIMS data. A training-of-trainers format is used to assist participants in further disseminating the information. Workshops are also conducted through the Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN) videoconferencing network, reaching a broader audience and allowing interactions between staff from the different ESC regions. Twice a year, one- or two-day PEIMS coordinator training sessions are held in Austin to review changes to the *PEIMS Data Standards*.

A Person Identification Database (PID) error rate policy being phased in over six years beginning in 2000-01 will require that the student identifying information provided to TEA as part of each district's PEIMS data submissions meet a standard for accuracy. The PID system is used by TEA to manage and

store identifying information on students reported to TEA through PEIMS. The system verifies that social security number (or alternative identification), last name, first name, and date of birth match on every record submitted for an individual. Although the overall PID error rate for the state has declined with each data submission since student enrollment data were first collected in 1990-91, PID errors continue to complicate efforts to link data across two or more data submissions. PID errors do not affect the calculation of the annual dropout rate. However, longitudinal performance measures of school completers and school leavers require linking many years of data. In addition, greater reliance is being placed on desk audits of district leaver data submissions. Because these audits require that student data be linked across multiple years, the accuracy of PID information has become more critical. Moreover, inaccuracies in student identification information can cause students for whom records had been submitted to appear on district lists of underreported students. Student data submitted in 2005-06 must have 10 or fewer student records with PID errors or a PID error rate of 1.0 percent or lower.

Software made available to districts shortly after the beginning of each school year enables them to identify potential data problems and correct data errors before the data submission is due. In 1999-00, TEA introduced a web-based enhancement that gives districts more lead time to correct PID errors before submitting their PEIMS data to TEA.

The PEIMS web page (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/peims/) also provides on-line access to general information about PEIMS, the *PEIMS Data Standards*, other reporting instructions, and contact information for inquiries. Through a Listserv service, individuals can request to be notified by e-mail anytime new information related to PEIMS is posted on the TEA website.

Policy Issues Regarding Data Quality and Leaver Reporting

Overview

The credibility of the accountability system depends in part on the reliability of the data used in the performance measures. Leaver reporting represents a dramatic improvement in the ability to account for all students in the Texas public education system. Four years' worth of leaver data will provide sufficient information to track students individually over their high school careers as they enter and leave the system for different reasons. In combination with other data sources, the leaver reporting system can provide a more accurate picture and a better understanding of long-term student progress in the state. As the leaver reporting system evolves, policymakers remain mindful of a number of data quality issues.

Underreported Students

Underreported students, those Grade 7-12 students served the previous year for whom districts fail to submit a leaver or enrollment record, are not factored into the dropout calculation. Although leaver reporting has improved significantly since it was implemented in 1998, there are lingering concerns that school districts may not be identifying all of their dropouts.

The primary drawback to counting underreported students as dropouts is that the dropout rate would change from a dropout measure to a combined measure of dropouts and data reporting problems. Trying to use the dropout definition to correct a data quality problem would produce a dropout rate that is no longer meaningful as an indicator of educational performance.

In-State Transfers

Out of 155,867 students reported to have withdrawn in 1998-99 to transfer to other public school districts in the state, 32,798 students (21 percent) could not be found in the enrollment records submitted by other districts. Districts are not required to track students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere to confirm that they do re-enroll. Documentation at the time the student withdraws from school that shows intent to enroll elsewhere has been considered sufficient evidence that the student is not a dropout under

both the Texas and national definitions. This documentation is typically a withdrawal form signed by the parent, although other types of documentation are accepted (see Appendix C).

In almost 80 percent of the cases, students for whom the district received a transfer request or who withdrew with documented intent to enroll in another Texas public school district actually did so and were found in enrollment files or other public education data files. Some of the students who withdrew intending to enroll elsewhere may not have been found because their student records did not match; others, because they enrolled in private schools, alternative schools or GED preparation programs, or were being home schooled. It is also possible that some never returned to school.

The percentage of students who could not be found in enrollment dropped from 31 percent in 1997-98 to 21 percent in 1998-99. Nevertheless, concerns remain that students who fail to re-enroll elsewhere are never counted as dropouts. The primary drawback to adding unverified transfers to the dropout count is that the status of these students is not known. Adding students who may not be dropouts to the dropout rate would distort the meaning of the dropout measure and decrease its effectiveness as a performance indicator. As part of the accountability system safeguards audit process, districts with unusually high percentages of unverified in-state transfers are investigated.

Other Issues

Leaver data are self-reported by districts, unlike test results, which are reported directly to TEA by the testing companies. A 1996 audit by the State Auditor's Office (SAO, 1996) and TEA data investigations in 1999 found that districts often did not have sufficient documentation on student withdrawals. In some cases, investigators found no documentation. In other cases, however, districts were not clear about the types of documentation required. Given the high stakes associated with use of leaver data in the accountability system, concerns persist about the accuracy of the data submitted by districts.

While TEA has taken steps to clarify data reporting requirements, resources available to monitor the accuracy of district submissions continue to be limited. Some audits can be completed at the agency, but others require on-site visits. Because few staff are available to conduct inquiries, data investigations must focus on the most serious problems identified. Consideration must be given as well to limited means at the district level. School districts have had to redirect financial and staff resources to the task of determining the whereabouts of students who left without notifying them.

Rider 71 of the General Appropriations Act (House Bill 1, 76th Texas Legislature, Regular Session) directed the Legislative Budget Board, State Auditor's Office, and TEA to conduct a study of the current system used to identify and report students who do not graduate from high school or those who drop out of school before enrolling in high school. Published in December 2000, *Dropout Study: A Report to the 77th Texas Legislature* (Legislative Budget Board, 2000) includes recommendations for improving the quality of data collected under the leaver reporting system. The report is available on-line at www.tea.state.tx.us/research/dropout/rider71study.

Measures of Student Progress Through Secondary School

Reporting and Use of Measures

For more than a decade, TEA has used data collected annually from school districts to produce various counts and rates that represent the degree to which students are successfully completing school. Which measures are reported and how they are used have changed over time in response to numerous factors, such as data quality and computer technology, research and evaluation needs, policy implications, and public interest.

Statewide public reporting of student performance and progress began in 1985-86. A year before, the Texas Legislature had passed a law (Texas Education Code [TEC] §21.258, 1986) requiring that all school districts publish an annual performance report (APR). The reports were intended to inform communities about the quality of education in their school districts and to provide educators and policymakers with information needed to analyze performance trends. Although primarily produced at the local level, APRs soon incorporated aggregate student data collected and compiled by TEA. In 1988, the reports included agency counts of district enrollment and high school graduates.

Responding to growing public concern about dropouts, TEA began supplementing APR data the following year with publication of an annual report on public school dropouts (TEA, 1989). Using PEIMS student-level data, the report presented actual annual dropout counts and rates for Grades 7-12 by county, district, and campus. It also included five-year projections of cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates for the state, as mandated by statute (TEC §11.205, 1988).

In 1989, the Texas Legislature required the State Board of Education to adopt a set of student performance indicators that would serve as the basis for school district accreditation (TEC §21.7531, 1990). When the Academic Excellence Indicator System was established a year later, annual AEIS reports replaced the agency information previously distributed through APRs. Among the initial performance indicators adopted by the board and reported through AEIS were annual graduation and dropout rates. In 1991, TEA began reporting these rates in two additional publications: *Snapshot*, a compilation of district profile data; and *Pocket Edition*, a small brochure highlighting statewide education statistics.

With adoption of Chapter 35 of the Texas Education Code in 1993, the legislature directed that AEIS data form the foundation of a performance-based accountability system to rate school districts and campuses. One of the performance indicators targeted in statute for this purpose was dropout rates. In 1994, annual Grade 7-12 dropout rates from the prior year were used for *Exemplary* and *Recognized* ratings only. The next year, TEA began using annual dropout rates in the accountability system for all ratings categories. Also in 1995, the agency was required to report detailed information about dropouts in the Comprehensive Biennial and Interim Reports to the Texas Legislature (TEC §39.182 and §39.185, 1996).

Interest in reporting actual, rather than estimated, longitudinal indicators of student success or failure in school had remained high since student-level data were first collected through PEIMS in 1988. Such measures could provide valuable information about how well the public education system was serving students throughout their school careers. In 1996, TEA investigated using a high school completion rate as an alternative or supplement to an annual dropout rate in the accountability system (TEA, 1996a). Four-year completion rates for the classes of 1996 and 1997 were published as report-only indicators in the 1998 AEIS reports. By 1998, the agency had sufficient years of PEIMS data to follow the progress of a seventh-grade class of students individually through high school to determine their final statuses. Actual Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rates for the class of 1998 were included in AEIS a year later. The dropout rates for 1997-98 were the first to incorporate data collected through the comprehensive leaver reporting system.

This year, separate longitudinal dropout rates and completion rates have been replaced with a four-year high school completion/student status series. The new series is made up of four complementary

Table 4.
Common Methods of Measuring Student Progress Through School

	Annual Dropout Rate	Completion/ Student Status Rate	Longitudinal Dropout Rate	Attrition Rate
Description	The percentage of students who drop out of school during one school year.	The percentage of students from a class of 7th or 9th graders who graduate, receive a GED, or are still enrolled at the time the class graduates.	The percentage of students from a class of 7th or 9th graders who drop out before completing high school.	The percentage of students from a class of 9th graders not enrolled in Grade 12 four years later.
Calculation	Divide the number of students who drop out during a school year by the total number of students enrolled that year.	Divide the number of students who drop out by the end of Grade 12, or the number who complete school, by the total number of students in the original 7th- or 9th-grade class. Students who transfer in over the years are added to the class; students who transfer out are subtracted.		Subtract Grade 12 enrollment from Grade 9 enrollment four years earlier, then divide by the Grade 9 enrollment. The rate may be adjusted for estimated population change over the four years.
Advantages	• Measure of annual performance. • Requires only one year of data. • Can be calculated for any school or district with students in any of the grades covered. • Can be disaggregated by grade level.	• More consistent with the public's understanding of a dropout rate. • Districts have more time to encourage dropouts to return to school before being held accountable. • More stable measure over time. • The completion/student status rate is a more positive indicator than the dropout rate, measuring school success rather than failure.		• Provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available.
Disadvantages	• Produces the lowest rate of any method. • May not correspond to the public's understanding of a dropout rate.	• Requires multiple years of data; one year of inaccurate student identification data can remove a student from the measure. • Program improvements may not be reflected for several years, and districts are not held accountable for some dropouts until years after they drop out. • Can only be calculated for schools that have all the grades in the calculation and that have had all those grades for the number of years necessary to calculate the rate. Since few high schools have Grades 7 and 8, longitudinal dropout and completion rates are often calculated for Grades 9-12. • Does not produce a dropout rate by grade.		• Produces the highest rate of any method. • Does not distinguish attrition that results from dropping out from that resulting from grade-level retentions, transfers to other schools, early graduation, etc. • Does not always correctly reflect the status of dropouts; adjustments for growth can further distort the rate. • Cannot be used in accountability systems because it is an estimate.
Remarks	A Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate has been calculated by TEA since 1987-88. This is the rate used in the accountability system.	The method used to calculate the 1998-99 completion/ student status rate was revised so the longitudinal dropout rate and completion/student status rate add to 100%.	TEA began calculating an actual Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate with the 1997-98 school year.	The attrition rate reported by TEA is not adjusted for growth.
TEA 1998-99	Annual dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **1.6%** Grades 9-12 **2.2%**	Completion/ student status rate: Grades 7-12 **91.0%** Grades 9-12 **91.5%**	Longitudinal dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **9.0%** Grades 9-12 **8.5%**	Unadjusted attrition rate: Grades 7-12 **25.7%** Grades 9-12 **36.6%**
TEA 1997-98	Annual dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **1.6%** Grades 9-12 **2.2%**	Completion/ student status rate: Grades 7-12 **90.2%** Grades 9-12 **91.1%**	Longitudinal dropout rate: Grades 7-12 **9.8%** Grades 9-12 **8.9%**	Unadjusted attrition rate: Grades 7-12 **N/A** Grades 9-12 **35.9%**

longitudinal rates: graduation, GED, school continuation, and dropout. Using a revised method, the four rates add to 100 percent. Completion/student status rates for the classes of 1998 and 1999 appear for the first time as report-only indicators in the 2000 AEIS reports.

Comparing Completion and Dropout Rates

Components of Rates

While a number of different rates are currently used to measure the degree to which students either leave school or complete their education, the distinctions between them are not always clear. To understand how and why dropout and completion rates vary, it is important to look at some of the factors that can affect how they are calculated. These include the definition of a dropout or of school completion, the accuracy of the data, the time period covered, and the student population considered. Some rates, for example, are annual, whereas others cover multiple years. Some are based on actual student-level data, whereas others use estimated student counts. Table 4 compares the most common methods of calculating dropout and completion/student status rates, advantages and disadvantages of each, and the rates they produce for the 1998-99 school year. Descriptions of the different methods follow.

Annual Dropout Rates

Description. The annual dropout rate is the percentage of students who drop out of school during one school year.

Calculation. An annual dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who drop out during a single school year by the total number of students enrolled that same year. Annual dropout rates reported by different organizations may differ because: (1) different grade levels are included in the calculation; (2) dropouts are defined and counted differently; (3) total student counts are taken at different times of the school year; or (4) the data systems employed provide different levels of precision.

Advantages. An annual dropout rate measures what happens in a school, district, or state during one school year and can be considered a measure of annual performance. Because it is based on a simple mathematical operation and requires data for only one school year, it has the greatest potential to produce accurate rates that are comparable across schools, districts, or states. It can be calculated for any school that has students in any of the grades included in the calculation, allowing the largest number of campuses to be included in an accountability system.

Annual dropout rates can also be calculated for student groups based on demographic characteristics (ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age), special program participation (special education, bilingual/English as a second language, career and technology), or other educational factors (grade level, at risk, overage for grade). This makes an annual dropout rate a practical tool to help educators determine who is dropping out and why – essential information for developing and evaluating dropout prevention and recovery programs.

Disadvantages. Because an annual dropout rate uses data for only one year, it produces the lowest dropout rate of any of the methods. There is concern that reporting low dropout rates may understate the severity of the dropout problem. This concern is based in part on the perception that an annual dropout rate is not consistent with the public's understanding of what a dropout rate is measuring.

TEA Reporting. An annual dropout rate was first calculated by TEA in 1987-88 as the number of dropouts from Grades 7-12 divided by the total number of students enrolled in Grades 7-12 the fall of that same year. The same calculation was used for the first five years of dropout reporting.

In 1992-93, districts began submitting individual student attendance records as part of the PEIMS data collection. For the first time, TEA was able to compute cumulative enrollment – the number of stu-

Why Is the TEA Dropout Rate Low?

A concern underlying much of the criticism of the annual dropout rate for Texas reported by TEA is that it understates the problem of dropouts in Texas. Following are some of the reasons the TEA dropout rate is low.

Dropout Definition

- **Grades covered.** By law, the TEA dropout rate includes students in Grades 7 and 8. Because these students drop out at much lower rates than high school students, including them brings down the average. The Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate for 1998-99 was ***1.6*** percent, compared to ***2.2*** percent for Grades 9-12.

- **Data processing enhancements.** An automated data search allows TEA to remove students from the dropout count who are found to be enrolled elsewhere or to have graduated or received a GED certificate. Although these students would not be considered dropouts under most definitions, a less sophisticated data processing system would not be able to identify and remove them. (Few states collect individual student-level data. Appendix D compares dropout information for many states.) Had these students not been excluded, the annual dropout rate would have increased .5 percentage points in 1998-99 – from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.1*** percent.

- **Accountability definition.** Some categories of students who would typically be considered dropouts are removed from the dropout count to avoid unintended consequences for students or unfairly penalizing districts for dropout circumstances outside their control. The following categories of students are considered dropouts by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) but are excluded from the TEA dropout count: (1) students who were counted as a dropout in a previous school year; (2) students who withdrew to enroll in approved adult education GED preparation programs; (3) seniors who met all graduation requirements but did not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS); (4) students enrolled but not eligible for state funding; and (5) students who were reported as a dropout from more than one district and whose last district attended cannot be determined. Including these five categories of students in the dropout count in 1998-99 would have increased the annual dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.6*** percent.

  To encourage districts to recover students who have dropped out, TEA excludes from the dropout count students who return to school by January the following school year. NCES requires that students be enrolled on the fall enrollment count date in October. Using the October return date would probably increase the dropout count significantly.

- **In-State Transfers.** In 1998-99, there were 32,798 students reported as withdrawing to enroll in other Texas public school districts for whom subsequent enrollment records were not found. Neither TEA nor NCES requires districts to track students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere to confirm they do re-enroll. It is not known how many of these students enrolled out of state or in private schools, were being home schooled, or whose records could not be matched across data collections. Designating these students as dropouts would have increased the annual dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***3.4*** percent.

- **GED Recipients.** GED recipients are not considered dropouts under either the TEA or NCES dropout definition or under the definitions used by most other states. Including GED recipients in the dropout count in 1998-99 would have increased the annual rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.1*** percent.

Dropout Rate Calculation

- **Annual rate.** The annual dropout rate is low compared to other rates because it is a "snapshot" rate, measuring how many students drop out during one school year. Longitudinal rates, on the other hand, measure how many students drop out before they finish high school, covering the four or six years from the time they enter Grade 9 or Grade 7. The Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate in 1998-99 was ***1.6*** percent, compared to a Grade 7 longitudinal dropout rate of ***9.0*** percent.

- **Cumulative enrollment.** TEA uses cumulative enrollment, rather than fall enrollment, in the dropout rate denominator. Although cumulative enrollment is the preferred count for calculating dropout rates, it can reduce the dropout rate by increasing the size of the denominator. Due to rounding, the 1998-99 dropout rate was ***1.6*** percent using either enrollment count.

Data Quality

- **Underreported students.** In 1998-99, there were 21,432 Grade 7-12 students for whom districts failed to submit a leaver or enrollment record. This undoubtedly included many students whose records could not be matched to the prior-year records due to errors in student identifying information. Adding these underreported records in the dropout count would have increased the dropout rate from ***1.6*** percent to ***2.8*** percent.

dents in attendance in Grades 7-12 at any time during the previous school year. Cumulative enrollment more closely parallels the required reporting of dropouts, which covers students who drop out at any time during the school year and includes students who enroll after the fall enrollment count. Cumulative enrollment also provides the most consistent data for comparisons of dropout rates between districts and campuses with different mobility rates. For these reasons, cumulative enrollment replaced fall enrollment in the dropout rate calculation. This is the only change that has been made to the calculation during the 12 years the annual dropout rate has been reported by TEA.

Table 5 shows TEA 1998-99 annual dropout rates by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In 1998-99, 1.6 percent of students in Grades 7-12 dropped out of school. (Historical annual dropout rates back to 1987-88 are presented in Table H-7 in Appendix H.) An annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was also calculated for 1998-99 dropouts. The statewide Grade 9-12 dropout rate was 2.2 percent.

Table 5.
Annual Dropout Rate (%), Grades 7-12 and Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Grades 7-12	Grades 9-12
African American	2.3	3.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.9	1.2
Hispanic	2.3	3.1
Native American	1.3	1.7
White	0.8	1.2
Economically Disadvantaged	1.5	2.3
State	1.6	2.2

Longitudinal Completion and Dropout Rates

Description. A completion rate is the percentage of students from a class of ninth graders or seventh graders who complete their high school education by their anticipated graduation date. A longitudinal dropout rate is the percentage of students from the same class who drop out before completing their high school education.

Calculation. Calculating longitudinal rates requires tracking a class (or cohort) of students over five to seven years, from the time they enter Grade 9 or Grade 7 until the fall following their anticipated graduation date. The completion rate is the number of students who graduate or receive a GED certificate, divided by the total number of students in the cohort who had a final status. The rate may also include the status of students who remain in school after the class graduates. The longitudinal dropout rate is the number of students who drop out divided by the total number of students in the class. Students who transfer in over the years are added to the original class as it progresses through the grade levels; students who transfer out are subtracted from the class.

Longitudinal rates reported by different organizations may differ because they use: (1) different starting grades in the calculation (typically Grade 9 or Grade 7); (2) different definitions of a school completer or dropout; (3) different definitions of a cohort or class of students; or (4) different underlying methods to calculate the rates. Few organizations have the data and computer capacity to track individual students over a number of years, so longitudinal rates are often estimated based on state-level data or sample data from surveys.

Advantages. One advantage of a longitudinal measure is that it is more consistent with the public's understanding of what a school completer or dropout is – someone who enters Grade 9 or Grade 7 and, during the next five or seven years, either completes high school or a GED, remains enrolled, or drops out. Also, districts have more time to encourage dropouts to return to school before being held accountable for those students. Because the status of a student is not determined until the fall after the anticipated graduation date, districts have up to five or seven years to bring dropouts back to school. A longitudinal measure can also be expected to be more stable over time than an annual measure. Fluctuations in an annual dropout rate may not necessarily reflect the long-term success or failure of the district's dropout prevention program.

The completion rate is more positive than the dropout rate, measuring school success instead of failure. Like most indicators of school success, an increase in the completion rate represents improved performance. Because separate rates can be reported for different ways to complete school, such as graduating or receiving a GED certificate, completion rates can provide more information with which to evaluate districts than the dropout rate.

Disadvantages. Calculating a longitudinal rate requires linking individual student records from multiple sources across five or seven years. An error in basic identifying information can prevent linking one record to others for the student. The method also requires that decisions be made about how to classify students who change schools and move in and out of special programs over time. Changes in data collection practices and in the dropout definition over time must also be incorporated into the method.

Continuing students who drop out after their anticipated graduation date are never counted as dropouts under a longitudinal method. Tracking students for an additional year would undoubtedly result in changes in both directions – dropouts returning to school or receiving GED certificates and continuing students dropping out before they graduate.

Longitudinal rates can only be calculated for schools that have all the grade levels included in the rate and that have had all those grades for the number of years necessary to calculate the rate. Since few high schools include Grades 7 and 8, high school completion rates are calculated for a class of Grade 9 students rather than a class of Grade 7 students.

A longitudinal method does not produce a dropout rate by grade. The completion rates and longitudinal dropout rates for special programs will reflect decisions about how to classify students who move in and out of those programs. For example, the longitudinal dropout rate for students in special education programs may include only those students who were receiving special education services the year they dropped out.

Improvements in dropout prevention programs may not be reflected in a longitudinal dropout rate immediately because the rate is based on the final status of a single class rather than all grades in the school. At the same time, many dropouts are not included in a longitudinal dropout rate until several years after they drop out. This means districts may be held accountable in one year for students who dropped out several years earlier.

TEA Reporting. Due to interest on the part of educators and policymakers in a longitudinal completion rate, TEA has calculated completion rates for six classes of ninth-grade students, the graduating classes of 1994 through 1999. The method used to calculate these rates was revised so that, as presented in this report for the classes of 1998 and 1999, the completion/student status rate and longitudinal dropout rate add to 100 percent. The completion/student status rate includes three components: graduates, GED recipients, and continuing students. The longitudinal dropout rate makes up a fourth component. The longitudinal rate is based on the same definition of dropouts used in the TEA annual dropout rate.

The longitudinal rates for 1998-99 track students who began Grade 9 for the first time in 1995-96. Completion/student status and longitudinal dropout rates are reported in AEIS district reports and on the

Table 6.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates (%),
Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1999

	Graduated	Received GED	Continued	Dropped Out	Total
African American	74.7	3.1	10.6	11.6	100
Asian/Pacific Islander	87.4	2.2	6.3	4.2	100
Hispanic	70.6	3.5	12.8	13.1	100
Native American	81.4	5.2	6.8	6.6	100
White	86.2	4.6	4.2	4.9	100
Economically Disadvantaged	71.3	3.8	11.8	13.1	100
State	79.5	4.0	8.0	8.5	100

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

campus reports for high schools with continuous enrollment in Grades 9-12 for the preceding four years. The four separate rates are reported, as shown in Table 6. About 79.5 percent of students in the class of 1999 graduated, 4.0 percent received a GED certificate, 8.0 percent were continuing in school after their class graduated, and 8.5 percent dropped out.

TEA calculated a Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate for the first time in 1997-98. The longitudinal dropout rate for the class of 1998-99 tracks students who began Grade 7 in 1993-94. Table 7 shows TEA 1998-99 Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rates by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. About 9.0 percent of students in the class of 1999 dropped out before completing high school. The longitudinal dropout rate for Grades 7-12 is higher than the rate for Grades 9-12 because it includes students who dropped out of Grades 7 and 8 as well as those who dropped out of Grades 9-12, while the cohort or class size remained about the same. Longitudinal completion/student status rates are also calculated for Grades 7-12. About 78.1 percent of the class of 1999 graduated, 3.9 percent received a GED certificate, and 8.9 percent were continuing in school after their class graduated.

Before 1997-98, TEA estimated longitudinal dropout rates because there were not enough years of PEIMS student-level data to calculate an actual longitudinal dropout rate. These estimated rates were based on state-level data for the most current year.

Table 7.
Longitudinal Dropout Rate (%), Grades 7-12,
by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1999

African American	11.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.6
Hispanic	14.3
Native American	8.3
White	5.1
Economically Disadvantaged	14.8
State	9.0

Projected Dropout Rates. In addition to the annual and longitudinal dropout rates for Grades 7-12 for the current year, TEA is required by statute (TEC §39.182, 1999) to report projected dropout rates for the next five years, assuming no state action is taken to reduce the dropout rate. The projections reflect the

assumptions underlying the projection methods used. The annual projections are based on dropout rates by grade and ethnicity for the current year. The ethnic compositions of Grades 7-12 are projected to change over the next five years. The longitudinal projections are based on dropout rates by ethnicity for the most recent graduating class. The ethnic compositions of Grade 7 cohorts are projected to change over the next five years. In both cases, the projected state rates hold constant or rise very slightly.

Attrition Rates

Description. An attrition rate is the percentage of students from a class of ninth graders not enrolled in Grade 12 four years later.

Calculation. The attrition rate is calculated by subtracting Grade 12 enrollment from Grade 9 enrollment four years earlier, and dividing by the Grade 9 enrollment.

Advantages. The attrition rate provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available.

Disadvantages. The attrition rate does not take into account any of the reasons the beginning and ending enrollments are different. Therefore, there is no way to distinguish attrition that results from dropping out of school from attrition resulting from grade-level retention, students transferring to private schools, death, or early graduation. For this reason, the attrition rate can fluctuate because of factors that are not considered a reflection of school performance, such as the student mobility rate, and factors Texas has chosen not to include as performance measures, such as retention rates. When used as a proxy for a longitudinal dropout rate, the attrition rate overstates the dropout problem. Appendix E compares the TEA Grade 9-12 longitudinal dropout rate and Grade 9-12 attrition rate for the class of 1999.

Furthermore, the attrition rate does not always correctly reflect the status of dropouts. The Grade 7-12 longitudinal dropout rate is higher than the Grade 9-12 longitudinal dropout rate because the Grade 7-12 rate includes students who dropped out of Grades 7-8, as well as students who dropped out of Grades 9-12. The opposite is true of the attrition rate. An attrition rate based on Grade 7 is lower than the Grade 9 attrition rate. Also, dropouts who return to school but are behind a grade count as part of the attrition rate.

Differences in growth rates across grade levels and between schools and districts can distort the attrition rate, and the calculations sometimes include growth adjustments. However, the adjustments themselves may cause distortions. For a school or district that is not growing but has an effective dropout prevention program, a growth adjustment would inflate the attrition rate.

Finally, because the attrition rate is an estimate, it should not be used as a performance indicator in a high stakes accountability system.

TEA Reporting. TEA calculated a Grade 9-12 attrition rate for 1999 by comparing 1998-99 Grade 12 enrollment to 1995-96 Grade 9 enrollment, without adjustments for growth. As Table 8 shows, the Grade 9-12 attrition rate for the state was 36.6 percent. Using the same methods, TEA also calculated a Grade 7-12 attrition rate of 25.7 percent for 1999.

Table 8.
Attrition Rate (%), by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1999

	Grades 9-12	Grades 7-12
African American	43.9	31.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.0	-16.6
Hispanic	47.7	33.4
Native American	-11.0	-42.7
White	26.7	20.8
Economically Disadvantaged	55.5	54.5
State	36.6	25.7

State Dropout Policy

Current Statutory Requirements

While taking steps to expand local authority for education programs, state lawmakers throughout the 1990s demanded that districts and campuses be held accountable for student performance. The SBOE, under direction from the legislature, adopted a set of student performance indicators in 1990 to evaluate the quality and progress of Texas education. Prominent among these was a dropout rate indicator.

Although statute requires that the performance indicators include dropout rates (TEC §39.051, 1999), it does not specify the type of dropout rate calculation. TEA has calculated an annual dropout rate for Grades 7-12 since 1987-88. A longitudinal dropout rate for Grades 7-12, which requires seven years of student-level enrollment and dropout data, was first calculated for the class of 1998.

As a key element of the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System, dropout rates play an important role in accountability ratings. The annual dropout rate for Grades 7-12 is a component of district and campus accountability ratings (TEC §39.072, 1999). AEIS data are also used to administer statutory reward programs (TEC §39.091, 1999) and to generate district and campus performance reports (TEC §39.053, 1999), as well as school report cards for distribution to parents (TEC §39.052, 1999).

In addition to the accountability ratings, TEA is required by statute to report dropout rates to the governor and legislature in the *Comprehensive Biennial Report* (TEC §39.182, 1999) and *Interim Report* (TEC §39.185, 1999). This statute requires that the following types of dropout information be reported: (1) dropout rates of students in Grades 7-12, expressed in the aggregate and by grade level; (2) projected cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates for Grades 7-12 for five years, assuming no state action is taken to reduce the rates; and (3) a description of a systematic plan for reducing the projected dropout rates to 5 percent or less. See Appendix F for a history of the development of state dropout policy.

TEA Dropout Definition

Who Is Counted as a Dropout?

For 1998-99, a student reported to have left school for any of the following reasons was considered a dropout for accountability purposes:

- a student who was absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer and did not return to school by fall of the following school year;
- a student who completed the school year but failed to re-enroll the following school year;
- a student who left school to pursue a job or enter the military;
- a student who left school for reasons related to academic performance;
- a student who left school because of pregnancy or marriage;
- a student from a special education, ungraded, or alternative education program who left school;
- a student who left school and entered a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school (e.g., cosmetology school); or
- a student enrolled as a migrant whose whereabouts were unknown.

Who Is Not Counted as a Dropout?

Accountability System Considerations. The current TEA definition of a dropout grew out of the accountability system used to rate the performance of districts and campuses. Consequently, the definition excludes some students who might be considered dropouts under other dropout definitions. Some groups of school leavers are excluded from the dropout count to avoid unfairly penalizing districts for dropout circumstances outside their control. For example, due to the difficulty of tracking students who have left the

Table 9.
Leavers Not Counted as Dropouts for Accountability Purposes by the Texas Education Agency

Reason for leaving:	*Rationale for not counting student as dropout:*
Completed High School Program	
Students who graduate.	Students who have graduated should not be considered dropouts for accountability purposes, even if they later return to school to make up some deficiencies.
Students who earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.	The GED testing program was originally developed as a means of objectively certifying whether an individual had educational development equivalent to that of a high school graduate. Legislation was implemented nine years ago to permit students who were still enrolled in public school, but who were seriously credit deficient, to earn GED certificates. In light of this legislative decision, it is consistent to continue to count GED recipients as completers rather than dropouts after the dropout definition was removed from statute.
Seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).	These are students who have completed all coursework requirements for a diploma. Under the definition in law before the rewrite of the Texas Education Code (TEC), they were counted as dropouts. Legislative direction given at the time the TEC was rewritten indicated that, in deleting the dropout definition from code, it was intended that these students not be counted as dropouts. They are not counted as completers / continuing students under the Texas Education Agency (TEA) completion rate definition unless they are still enrolled in school.
Moved to Other Educational Setting	
Students who withdraw to enter college early.	These are students who are actively pursuing higher education by enrolling in specific degree plans. The *PEIMS Data Standards* are very specific in requiring the reporting districts to have documentation of enrollment in pursuit of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree (simply taking a class at the community college does not permit a district to use this leaver reason code). Because the student's education has neither ceased nor been interrupted, it is inappropriate to count the student as a dropout.
Students whose enrollment in other Texas public schools is documented, or for whom the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in public school outside the state or in private school.	Students who have left the district but are known to be continuing a high school program or its equivalent are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw with intent to enroll in school outside Texas or in private school.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they intend to enroll in school outside Texas or in private school, but for whom a transcript request has not been received. Because the parents maintain authority over the children's education, the students are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw with intent to enroll in other Texas public school districts.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they intend to enroll in other Texas public school districts, but for whom transcript requests have not been received. Because the parents maintain authority over the children's education, the students are not counted as dropouts. With the new leaver data collection, audits can be conducted to determine if the students did enroll in other districts.
Students who withdraw to enroll in approved alternative programs.	These are students for whom the district has documentation that they intend to attend alternative programs. The students are in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (at least 17 years old, or 16 years old for Job Corps programs) and are continuing to work towards completion of either a high school diploma or a GED certificate. Therefore, they are not counted as dropouts.
Students under the age of compulsory attendance withdrawn from school by court order.	These students are ordered by a court of law to attend specific alternative programs. The district does not have the authority to override such actions by the court; therefore, the students are not counted as dropouts. The district must have a copy of the court order on file.

Table 9.
Leavers Not Counted as Dropouts for Accountability Purposes by the Texas Education Agency (cont.)

Reason for leaving:	*Rationale for not counting student as dropout:*
Students who withdraw to begin home schooling.	This is also a situation in which the parents or legal guardians maintain authority over the children's education. Further, the students are identified to the school district as continuing a course of study without interruption. Consequently, the students are not counted as dropouts.
Withdrawn by District	
Students expelled.	TEC §37.007 (1999) defines circumstances in which districts are required or permitted to expel students, and TEC §39.051 (1999) excludes these students from the dropout count. Expelled students are not counted as dropouts during the term of expulsion. Also, those students whose adjudication indicates need for supervision and those convicted and sentenced are excluded from the dropout count.
Students who were administratively withdrawn when it was discovered that they were not residents or had falsified enrollment information.	The district was not obligated to enroll these students in the first place. Therefore, the students' withdrawal is an administrative correction and the district is not held accountable for them as dropouts.
Students withdrawn from school after failing to provide immunization records.	With few exceptions, students enrolling in Texas public schools must be immunized against specified contagious diseases. Under Texas Department of Health rules, districts must provisionally admit students who have begun the required immunizations but may withdraw those who do not complete the immunizations within 30 days. The students are not voluntarily dropping out; therefore, they are not counted as such.
Other Reasons	
Students who are in the protective custody of Child Protective Services (CPS) and have been forcibly removed by CPS, and the district has not been advised of the students' whereabouts.	This is an extreme situation in which an intervention was undertaken to protect a child's safety. The district does not have the authority to override such actions by CPS and cannot be held accountable for the child as a dropout.
Students who withdraw to enter health care facilities.	The assumption here is that the student's health was such that he or she was unable to remain in school. Students who enter health care facilities in Texas are provided education services by the facility or the district in which the facility is located, unless they are physically unable to continue secondary study. As such, the departure from school is not considered a voluntary interruption that the school could be expected to prevent or correct. Therefore, the students are not counted as dropouts for accountability purposes.
Students who have been incarcerated in facilities outside the boundaries of the school district.	These students become the responsibility of the district where the facility is located, which is obligated to see that educational services are made available. Hence, the students are more appropriately considered as transfers out of the district and are not counted as dropouts.
Students who withdraw from school to return to their home countries.	Due to the difficulty in tracking students who have left the country, districts are not required to confirm that these students have re-enrolled in school in order not to have them counted as dropouts. Districts must have documentation that the students are leaving or have left the country.
Students who had previously been counted as an official dropout in any year going back to 1991.	Research literature, as confirmed by input from educators participating in the commissioner's accountability focus groups, indicates that students who drop out but return to school are far more likely than their continuously enrolled peers to drop out again. To fully support districts in their efforts to recover students who have dropped out, repeat dropouts are only counted once as official dropouts.
Students who are deceased.	Self-explanatory.

country, students who withdraw from school to return to their home countries are not counted as dropouts, even if they do not indicate intent to re-enroll in school. To count these students as dropouts would inflate the dropout rates of districts that have disproportionate numbers of foreign students.

Others are excluded to avoid unintended negative consequences for students. For example, repeat dropouts (students who were counted as a dropout in a previous year, returned to school, then dropped out again) are removed from the official dropout count. Because students who drop out once but return to school are more likely to drop out again, including repeat dropouts in the count may unintentionally discourage districts from aggressively trying to recover these students.

Table 9 on pages 26 and 27 lists each group of students excluded from the dropout count under the current accountability definition and the rationale for not counting those students as dropouts. Appendix G describes the evolution of the current dropout definition.

Data Processing Refinements. Since PEIMS was first implemented in 1987, data processing refinements have helped TEA report student status information with increasing accuracy (see Table G-1 in Appendix G). Dropout records were the first individual student data records submitted as part of the PEIMS collection. In 1990-91, districts also began submitting individual student enrollment records. This allowed TEA to conduct an automated statewide search to determine if any students reported as dropouts were enrolled in other school districts in the state. In 1992-93 similar searches of graduate records and GED certificate records were also instituted. Although this effort does not constitute a change in the definition of a dropout, it does result in removing students from the dropout count who were incorrectly reported as dropouts by districts that were not aware the students had re-enrolled elsewhere. In 1998-99, the automated search of enrollment records was expanded to include students who return to school in the fall but leave before the PEIMS snapshot date or do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date. (PEIMS data submitted in the fall represent a snapshot of the district on a selected date, usually the last Friday in October.)

Currently, a student reported to have dropped out of school is not counted as a dropout in the accountability system under the following circumstances:

- the student is found to have been enrolled in another Texas public school;
- the student is found to have graduated;
- the student is found to have received a GED;
- the student is found to have been ineligible for state Foundation School Program funding;
- the student is found to have been reported as a dropout from more than one district, and the data cannot confirm which district the student last attended; or
- the student is found to have been counted as a dropout in a previous school year.

In 1998-99, there were 9,189 students reported as dropouts whose records were excluded from the annual dropout rate computations (see Table 10).

Table 10.
Exclusions from Dropout Counts, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

Reason for Exclusion	Frequency	Percent
Moved to another district	5,260	57.2
Received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate	1,856	20.2
Dropped out in a previous school year	1,608	17.5
Not eligible for Foundation School Program funding	131	1.4
Graduated	112	1.2
Duplicate/questionable reporting	222	2.4
Total excluded	9,189	100

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 11.
Comparison of Dropout Definitions Used by the Texas Education Agency and the National Center for Education Statistics, 1998-99 School Year

<table>
<tr><th>Texas Education Agency (TEA)</th><th>National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Definition.
TEA and NCES both define a dropout as a student who is enrolled in school at some time during the school year but either (1) leaves school during the school year without an approved excuse or documentation of having transferred to another school or (2) completes the school year but does not return the following year as expected.
The following students are considered dropouts under both definitions.
• Students who leave school for academic reasons, such as poor attendance or failing grades.
• Students who leave school for job-related reasons, such as pursuing a job or joining the military.
• Students who leave school because of family-related reasons, such as pregnancy or marriage.
• Students who leave school because of homelessness and migrant students whose whereabouts are unknown.
• Students who leave school and enter programs not qualifying as elementary/secondary school.
• Students who leave school and whose whereabouts are unknown.
The following students are not considered dropouts under either definition.
• Students who transfer to other public or private schools, are being home-schooled, or enroll in college early.
• Students who withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere.
• Foreign students returning to their home countries.
• Migrant students for whom subsequent school enrollment records are available.
• Students who graduate or receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.
• Students who die.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Students not counted as a dropout.
Students who were counted as a dropout in a previous school year.
Students who withdraw to enroll in approved adult education GED preparation programs.
Seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).
Students enrolled but not eligible for state funding.
Students who are reported as a dropout by more than one district and whose district last attended cannot be determined.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Grades covered. Grades 7-12.</td><td>Grades covered. Grades 9-12.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Summer dropouts.
Students who complete the school year but do not return the following year as expected are counted as dropouts from the grade and school year completed.</td><td>Summer dropouts.
Students who complete the school year but do not return the following year as expected are counted as dropouts from the grade and school year for which they fail to enroll.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Recaptures.
Students who leave during one school year but return the following school year by the January resubmission date for Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data are not considered dropouts.
Students who receive a GED certificate by March 1 of the following school year are not considered dropouts.</td><td>Recaptures.
Students who leave during the school year but are enrolled on the October PEIMS snapshot date the following school year are not considered dropouts.
Students who receive a GED certificate by the October PEIMS snapshot date the following school year are not considered dropouts.</td></tr>
</table>

National Dropout Reporting

The United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects a standard set of data from every state annually. Since 1992-93, NCES has been collecting data to report annual dropout rates for those states that meet NCES requirements for data quality and comparability. Changes to the NCES dropout definition since 1992-93 have brought it closer to the TEA definition, although there are still differences. Table 11 on page 29 compares the dropout definitions used by TEA and NCES.

There are five groups of students not counted as dropouts by TEA that are counted as dropouts by NCES: (1) students previously counted as a dropout, (2) students withdrawing to enroll in approved adult education GED preparation programs, (3) seniors who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level TAAS, (4) students enrolled but not eligible for state Foundation School Program funding, and (5) students reported as a dropout by more than one district and whose district last attended cannot be determined. TEA includes these students in the dropout counts reported to NCES. Table 12 shows the differences in the dropout counts with these groups of students included.

Table 12.
Dropout Counts Reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Dropout Counts Submitted by TEA to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Grades 7-12, by Ethnicity, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	TEA	NCES
African American	5,682	9,743
Asian/Pacific Islander	424	670
Hispanic	14,413	23,768
Native American	67	140
White	7,006	12,233
State	27,592	46,554

Note. Dropout counts for NCES do not include either the adjustment for summer dropout reporting or recaptures (returning students who are not enrolled on the Public Education Information Management System fall snapshot date).

The dropout data TEA reports to NCES do not meet the NCES requirements for counting recaptures and summer dropouts. Recaptures are those students who drop out before the end of the school year but return to school the following fall. Under the NCES definition, dropouts are removed from the dropout count if they return to school the following year and are enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date. Under the TEA definition, dropouts are removed from the count if they return anytime before the January PEIMS resubmission date. Recaptures who must be added back to the NCES dropout count include students who return to school but leave again before the PEIMS snapshot date and students who do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date. It is estimated that adding recaptures could increase the dropout count significantly. Changing the year and grade for which summer dropouts are reported, as required under the NCES definition, would probably have a negligible effect on the state dropout count.

Under the current leaver reporting system, leaver records are not submitted for students who return to school after the summer break. To include recaptures in the NCES dropout count, districts would be required to submit leaver data to TEA for students who return but are not enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date the following school year. It is estimated that this could mean reporting data on an additional 15,000 to 90,000 students, depending on how the *PEIMS Data Standards* are modified. Clearly, this change

would impose an additional data reporting burden on school districts. To minimize as much as possible any additional data reporting burden for school districts, significant changes to the PEIMS data submission requirements must be reviewed and approved by the Policy Committee on Public Education Information (PCPEI). The PCPEI, a commissioner's policy advisory group formed in 1991 to address issues related to the PEIMS data collection, is composed of representatives of school districts, education service centers, state government (the State Auditor's Office, Comptroller's Office, TEA, Legislative Budget Board, House Public Education Committee, Senate Education Committee, and Governor's Office), and education associations. Involvement of PCPEI also helps ensure that adequate lead time is available to school districts to make the required modifications to data systems to comply with data collection and reporting changes.

Although NCES requires states to submit dropout counts for Grades 7-12, the annual dropout rates they publish are Grade 9-12 rates. The calculation also differs from the TEA method. NCES uses fall enrollment (a count of students enrolled on the fall PEIMS snapshot date) as the denominator rather than cumulative enrollment (a count of students enrolled at any time during the school year) because few states can report cumulative enrollment.

As a result of the differences between TEA and NCES dropout definitions, NCES has not reported an annual Grade 9-12 dropout rate for Texas since the 1996-97 school year. TEA is currently investigating the possibility of collecting additional data to comply with the NCES definition. The additional information would allow TEA to report the NCES rate to provide an independent assessment of Texas' progress on dropouts compared to other states, but still retain a separate set of district and campus dropout indicators for use in the accountability system.

Statewide Dropout and Completion/Student Status Rates

Annual Dropout Rates

Calculation and Methods

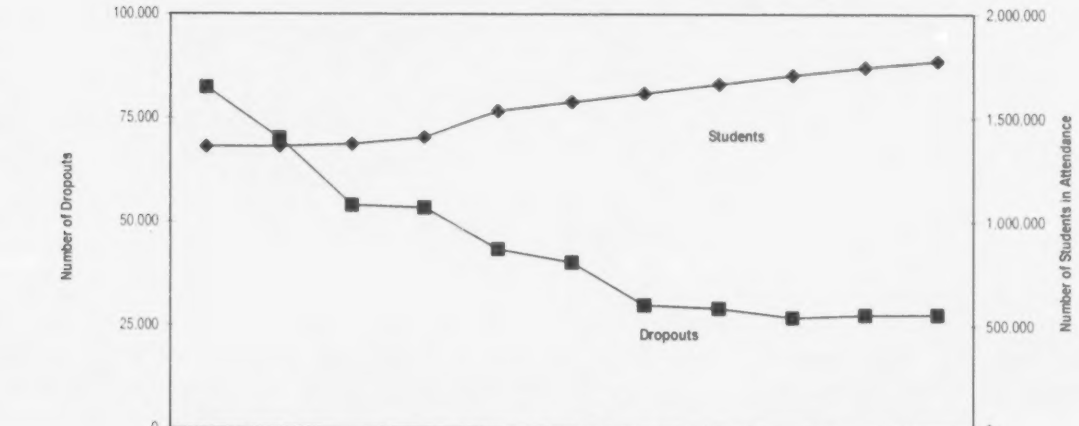
The annual dropout rate is calculated as the number of students in Grades 7-12 who drop out during a school year, divided by cumulative enrollment that same year. Cumulative enrollment is the number of students in attendance in Grades 7-12 at any time during the school year.

Annual dropout rates for Grades 7-12 were calculated at the state, district, and campus levels. (See the data supplements to this report (TEA, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) for listings of campus, district, and county rates.) The annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was calculated at the state level only. If a student attended more than one campus during the year, he or she counted in attendance at each campus and in each district. When attendance and dropout data were aggregated to district, county, regional, and state levels, a student was counted only once at each level. For example, a student who attended two schools within a district was counted as in attendance once for each campus, and once for the district. If the student dropped out, the student was counted as a dropout once for the campus last attended and once for the district last attended.

Grade 7-12 Annual Rate

State Rate. Out of 1,773,117 students enrolled in Grades 7-12 in Texas public schools during the 1998-99 school year, 27,592 students, or 1.6 percent, were reported to have dropped out (see Figure 6). The number of dropouts increased by just 42 (0.2%) over the number in 1997-98, while the number of students enrolled in Grades 7-12 increased by 29,978 (1.7%).

Figure 6.
Numbers of Students and Dropouts,
Grades 7-12, Texas Public Schools, 1988-89 Through 1998-99



	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Number of Dropouts	82,325	70,040	53,965	53,420	43,402	40,211	29,918	29,207	26,901	27,550	27,592
Number of Students	1,360,115	1,361,494	1,372,738	1,406,838	1,533,198	1,576,015	1,617,522	1,662,578	1,705,972	1,743,139	1,773,117

School Year

Of those students who did drop out, the largest number (7,659) and highest percentage of dropouts (27.8%) were in Grade 9 (see Table H-1 in Appendix H). Nevertheless, the dropout rate was highest in

Grade 12 at 2.9 percent, because enrollment was smaller in Grade 12 than Grade 9. In Grades 9, 10, and 11, the dropout rates were close to 2 percent (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.
Annual Dropout Rate, by Grade, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Grades 7-12
Dropout Rate, %	0.3	0.6	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.9	1.6
Dropouts	939	1,767	7,659	5,497	5,014	6,716	27,592
Students	315,126	312,470	376,422	288,371	246,075	234,653	1,773,117

Grade Level

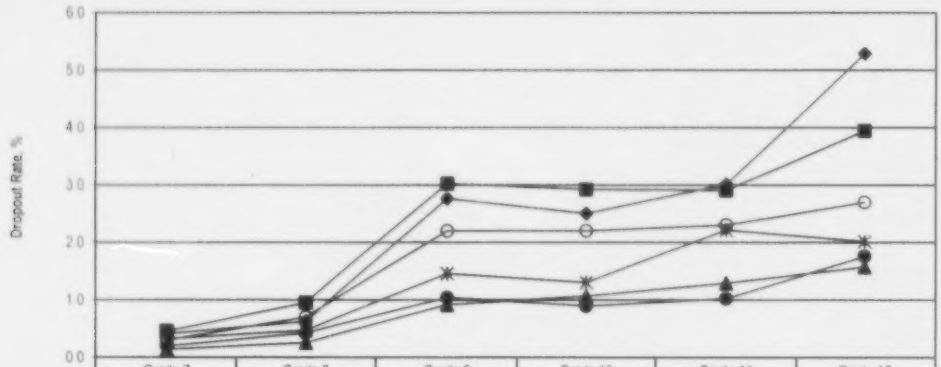
Rates Among Student Groups. In 1998-99, dropout rates for African American and Hispanic students were nearly three times as high as that for White students (see Figure 8). As in previous years, males dropped out at a slightly higher rate than females (see Table H-2 in Appendix H). Students identified as economically disadvantaged had a dropout rate of 1.5 percent, compared to 1.6 percent for students not so identified. This is inconsistent with expectations that the dropout rate for economically disadvantaged students would be higher than the rate for other students. Under PEIMS, a student may be identified as economically disadvantaged if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or for other public assistance. The percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged declines steadily between the middle

Figure 8.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	All Students
Dropout Rate, %	2.3	0.9	2.3	1.3	0.8	1.5	1.6
Dropouts	5,682	424	14,413	67	7,006	9,391	27,592
Students	248,748	47,762	638,041	5,292	833,274	616,720	1,773,117

Student Group and All Students

Figure 9.
Annual Dropout Rate, by Grade and Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99



	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
African American	0.4	0.6	2.8	2.5	3.0	5.3
Hispanic	0.5	1.0	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.9
White	0.1	0.3	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.6
Native American	0.3	0.5	1.5	1.3	2.2	2.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.8
Economically Disadvantaged	0.3	0.7	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.7
All Students	0.3	0.6	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.9

Grade Level

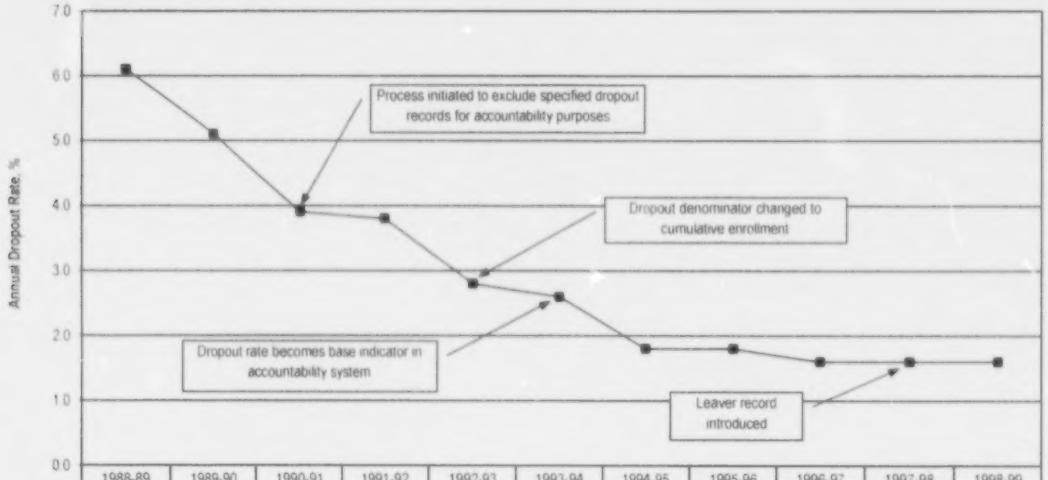
school and high school grades (from about 44 percent in Grade 7 to 25 percent in Grade 12 for the 1998-99 school year) raising questions about its interpretation as an indicator of academic risk in high school.

Breaking out dropout rates by student group and grade, the highest rate was for African American students in Grade 12 (5.3%), and the lowest rate was for White students in Grade 7 (0.1%). The dropout rates for all student groups were much higher in Grades 9 through 12 than in Grades 7 and 8, and the highest rates for all student groups except Native Americans were found in Grade 12 (see Figure 9). In addition, the gaps between dropout rates for White students and those for Hispanic and African American students were greatest at Grade 9 and above. Hispanic dropouts were more likely to leave school in Grade 9 than were White and African American dropouts, and African American dropouts were more likely to leave school in Grade 12 than were White and Hispanic dropouts (see Table H-3 in Appendix H).

Rates by Student Characteristics and Program Participation. An array of complex, often interrelated factors contribute to dropping out. Basic demographic characteristics, family and personal background, a student's academic history, and characteristics of the student's school all may influence whether a student will stay in school. Tables H-4 through H-6 in Appendix H present dropout information by student age, special program participation (bilingual/English as a second language, gifted/talented, special education, Title I), and other educational factors (at risk, limited English proficiency, migrant, overage/not on grade).

Trends in Annual Rates. Over the past decade, the Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate has gradually decreased (see Figure 10 on page 36). The statewide rate has held steady at 1.6 percent since the 1996-97 school year. Since the late 1980's, there have been refinements in dropout reporting, data processing, and calculations. Also, the dropout rate became a base indicator in the accountability system in 1993-94. When the leaver record was introduced in 1997-98, the overall number of dropouts increased for the first time, but the rate remained constant. The number of dropouts rose only slightly in the second year of the leaver record collection (see Table H-7 in Appendix H).

Figure 10.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, Texas Public Schools, 1988-89 Through 1998-99

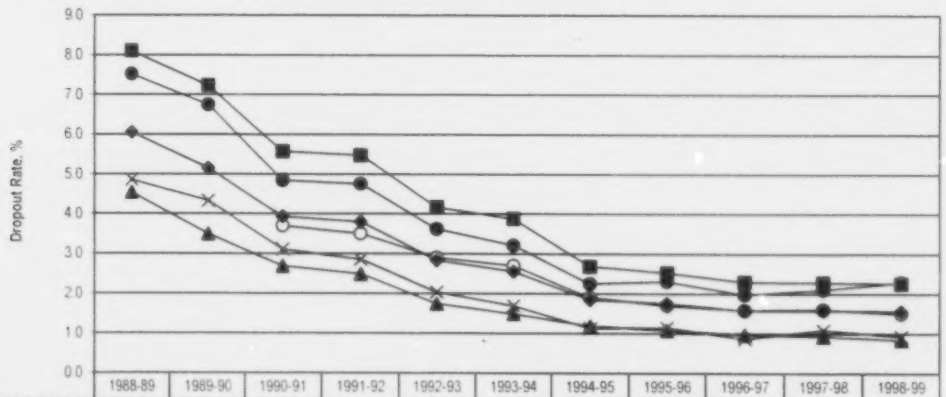


	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Dropout Rate, %	6.1	5.1	3.9	3.8	2.8	2.6	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.6
Dropouts	82,325	70,040	53,965	53,420	43,402	40,211	29,918	29,207	26,901	27,550	27,592

School Year

As in past years, dropout rates among certain ethnic minorities in 1998-99 remained higher than the overall dropout rate. While the annual dropout rate for Whites continued to decrease between 1996-97 and 1998-99, the rate for Hispanics leveled at 2.3 percent, and the rate for African American students increased from 2.0 percent to 2.3 percent (see Figure 11).

Figure 11.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1988-89 Through 1998-99



	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
African American	7.5	6.7	4.8	4.8	3.6	3.2	2.3	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.3
Hispanic	8.1	7.2	5.6	5.5	4.2	3.9	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.3
White	4.5	3.5	2.7	2.5	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.8
Other	4.9	4.3	3.1	2.9	2.0	1.7	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.9
Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	3.7	3.5	2.9	2.7	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5
All Students	6.1	5.1	3.9	3.8	2.8	2.6	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.6

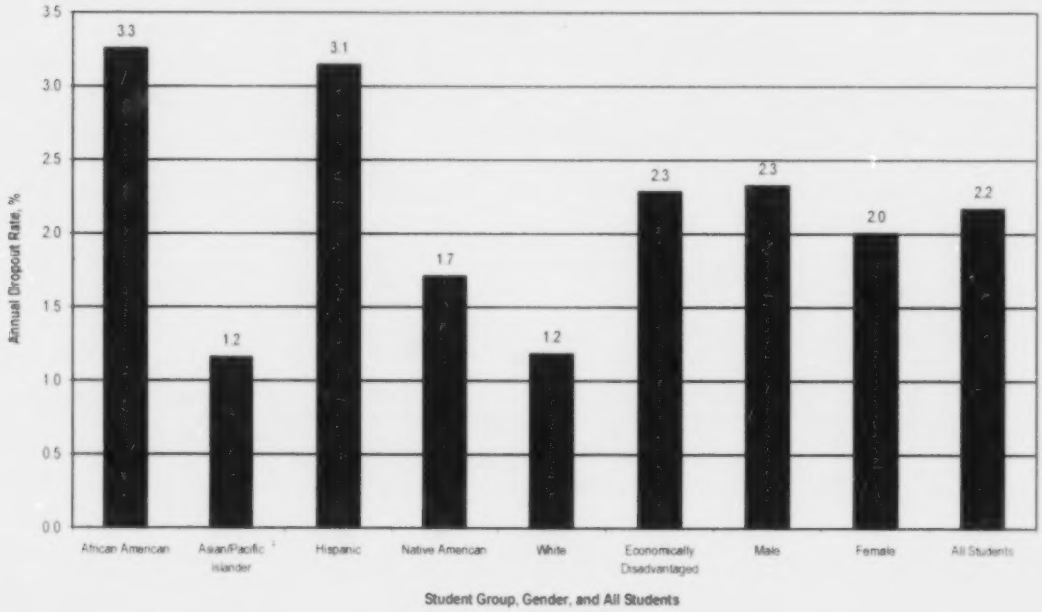
School Year

Grade 9-12 Annual Rate

Texas law requires that dropout rates be based on a span of Grades 7 through 12. Many organizations, including NCES, publish annual dropout rates based on a span of Grades 9 through 12. Adding two additional grade levels results in a greater number of dropouts reported for Grades 7-12 than that reported for Grades 9-12. But, because Grades 7 and 8 usually have lower dropout rates than the upper grades, annual rates that span Grades 7-12 are usually lower than rates that span Grades 9-12.

For the 1998-99 school year, the statewide annual dropout rate for Grades 9-12 was 2.2 percent, compared to the rate of 1.6 percent for Grades 7-12 (see Figure 12). There were 24,886 dropouts in Grades 9-12 in 1998-99, up slightly from 24,414 in 1997-98. The rate of 2.2 percent was unchanged between 1997-98 and 1998-99. Using a grade span of 7-12, rather than 9-12, increased the number of dropouts by 2,706, or 10.9 percent, and decreased the dropout rate by 0.6 percentage points. In both cases, the dropout rate was unchanged from the year before.

Figure 12.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99



To the extent that Grade 7 and 8 dropouts differ from dropouts in the higher grades, the picture presented of who drops out also differs. For example, in Grades 7 and 8, the dropout rates for females exceeded those for males (see Table H-2 in Appendix H). The Grade 7-12 dropout count had 12.5 percent more females than the Grade 9-12 dropout count, but only 9.5 percent more males. Because of these differences, the gap between male and female dropouts was greater in the Grade 9-12 rates than in the Grade 7-12 rates.

As another example, Hispanic dropouts tended to leave school earlier than White and African American dropouts, so Hispanic students made up a slightly higher share of Grade 7-12 dropouts than of Grade 9-12 dropouts. Even with these variations between the annual Grade 7-12 and Grade 9-12 dropout rates, the patterns in rates among major student groups and trends for these groups were similar in recent years (see Table H-7 and Table H-8 in Appendix H).

Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates

Introduction to the Rates

The PEIMS data collection makes it possible to calculate longitudinal rates by tracking students individually as they progress through school. For the 1997-98 school year, AEIS reports included two longitudinal report-only indicators: (1) a six-year longitudinal dropout rate, covering Grades 7-12; and (2) a four-year longitudinal completion rate, covering Grades 9-12. This year, TEA has combined these two measures using revised methods to produce a single completion/student status series. The new series provides complementary rates for graduates, recipients of a GED certificate, students still enrolled, and dropouts, which together add to 100 percent.

To begin reporting the series, TEA calculated rates for the Grade 7 and Grade 9 cohorts of the class of 1999. Completion/student status rates for the class of 1998 are provided as well for comparison purposes.

Calculation and Methods

Conceptual Approach. The completion/student status rate is an adaptation of the Holding Power Index (HPI) (Hartzell, McKay, & Frymier, 1992). The HPI follows a class of students, or cohort, over a period of years, and determines the status of each student after the anticipated graduation date of the cohort.

The Cohorts. PEIMS attendance data are used to build each cohort of students for the completion/student status rate. Each cohort is identified by the starting grade and anticipated year of graduation. For example, members of the class of 1999 Grade 9 cohort were identified as students who attended Grade 9 for the first time in the 1995-96 school year. Cohort members were then tracked through the fall semester following their anticipated graduation date of spring 1999. This made it possible to identify those who continued in school after their class graduated. Members who transferred out of the Texas public school system during the time period covered were removed from the cohort. Students who transferred into the system on grade were added to the cohort.

It is important to note that each student can belong to one and only one Grade 7 cohort and one and only one Grade 9 cohort. That is, cohort membership does not transfer from one cohort to another over time. Students who are retained in grade or who skip a grade remain members of the cohort they first joined.

Any student for whom one of the designated outcomes could be determined was counted in the cohort. This included students who began Grade 7 or Grade 9 together, as well as students who transferred into Texas public schools. Students whose final status could not be determined were removed from the status counts. In the vast majority of cases, these were students who transferred out of the Texas public school system. In a small number of cases, students were excluded because of exceptions in the accountability system. The progress of the class of 1999 Grade 9 cohort through high school is illustrated in Appendix I.

Student Status. The completion/student status rate focuses on selected long-term student outcomes over a period of years. Each member of the cohort is assigned a final status by the year after anticipated graduation. Neither dropping out nor leaving necessarily determines the final status of a student. The status of a student who drops out or leaves will change if he or she returns and graduates, obtains a GED, or continues in school. Dropping out becomes the status of record only if it is the final status for a student in the PEIMS database.

Graduates. A student is classified as a graduate in the year in which he or she is reported in PEIMS as a graduate.

GED Recipients. GED tests are given at over 200 centers throughout the state in school districts, colleges and universities, and education service centers. Tests are given year-round, and the results transmit-

ted electronically to TEA. Receipt of a GED certificate is reported as soon as the test is scored as passing. A student in the class of 1999 was assigned a final status of GED if he or she received a certificate before March 1, 2000. The student was counted in the last district and campus in which he or she was enrolled.

Dropouts. A student is classified as a dropout if this is the final status recorded for the student in the PEIMS database.

Continuing Enrollment. A student is classified as continuing if he or she is reported as enrolled in the state in the fall after his or her anticipated graduation.

Calculating the Rates. To determine completion/student status rates, the number of students in each status category (graduation, GED, school continuation, and dropout) is divided by the total number of students in the cohort. Because the same class is used to calculate each rate, the sum of the rates is always 100 percent.

Results

State Rates. Table 13 shows the completion/student status rates for Grade 7 and Grade 9 cohorts for the classes of 1998 and 1999. Out of 238,280 students in the 1995-96 Grade 9 cohort, 83.5 percent either graduated or received a GED certificate by 1999. An additional 8.0 percent continued school the following school year.

There were 20,231 dropouts from this class, making up 8.5 percent of the entering cohort. This was a decrease from the 8.9 percent longitudinal dropout rate for the class of 1998 Grade 9 cohort. The rate decrease was the result of disproportionate increases in cohort membership and dropouts. The cohort showed an increase in size of more than 10,000 students, compared to an increase in the number of dropouts of only five students.

Table 13.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status,
Grades 9-12 and 7-12, Texas Public Schools, Classes of 1998 and 1999

Cohort		Graduated		Received GED		Continued		Dropped Out	
Designation	Number	Number	Rate, %	Number	Rate, %	Number	Rate, %	Number	Rate, %
				Grade 9 Cohort					
Class of 1998	228,049	179,379	78.7	9,699	4.3	18,745	8.2	20,226	8.9
Class of 1999	238,280	189,441	79.5	9,524	4.0	19,084	8.0	20,231	8.5
				Grade 7 Cohort					
Class of 1998	231,976	178,057	76.8	9,623	4.1	21,558	9.3	22,738	9.8
Class of 1999	240,865	188,085	78.1	9,458	3.9	21,543	8.9	21,779	9.0

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

The Grade 7 cohorts for the classes of 1998 and 1999 demonstrated similar patterns. The graduation rate increased from 76.8 percent to 78.1 percent, while the rates of dropping out, GED certification, and continuation all decreased. The dropout rate for the class of 1999 Grade 7 cohort was 9.0 percent.

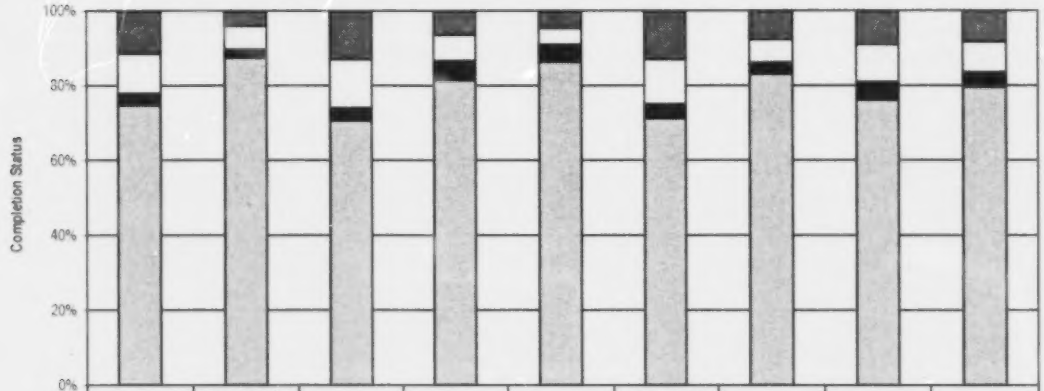
The Grade 7-12 and Grade 9-12 annual dropout rates differ from one another much more than do the Grade 7 and Grade 9 longitudinal dropout rates. This is primarily because of differences in the total number of students taken into account in the calculation, rather than differences in the actual number of drop-

outs. The Grade 7-12 annual dropout rate is based on the total number of students in six grade levels, and the Grade 9-12 annual rate is based on the total number of students in four grade levels. In contrast, both of the longitudinal rates are based on the number of students in only one grade level -- either Grade 7 or Grade 9; consequently, the rates are not so different from one another.

As mentioned earlier, Grade 7-12 annual dropout rates tend to be notably lower than Grade 9-12 annual rates. This is because Grades 7 and 8 contribute a relatively small number of students to the dropout count, but a relatively large number of students to the overall population considered. Longitudinal dropout rates, on the other hand, show a different pattern -- Grade 7 rates are slightly higher than Grade 9 rates. Although the Grade 7 start does add a relatively small number of students to the cumulative dropout count, the difference in the sizes of the Grade 7 and Grade 9 cohorts is also small.

Rates Among Student Groups. Completion/student status rates demonstrate that secondary-school experiences varied considerably by student group (see Figure 13). For example, in the Grade 9 cohort for the class of 1999, White students as a group had a graduation rate of 86.2 percent, whereas African American students and Hispanic students had graduation rates of 74.7 percent and 70.6 percent, respectively. Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students had the highest longitudinal dropout rates, with each group at 13.1 percent. Hispanics were most likely among the student groups to be continuing school in the fall after anticipated graduation. Native Americans had the largest percentage of students (5.2%) receiving GED certificates. Females had a higher graduation rate than males and lower rates of GED certification, continuation, and dropping out.

Figure 13.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates, Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1999



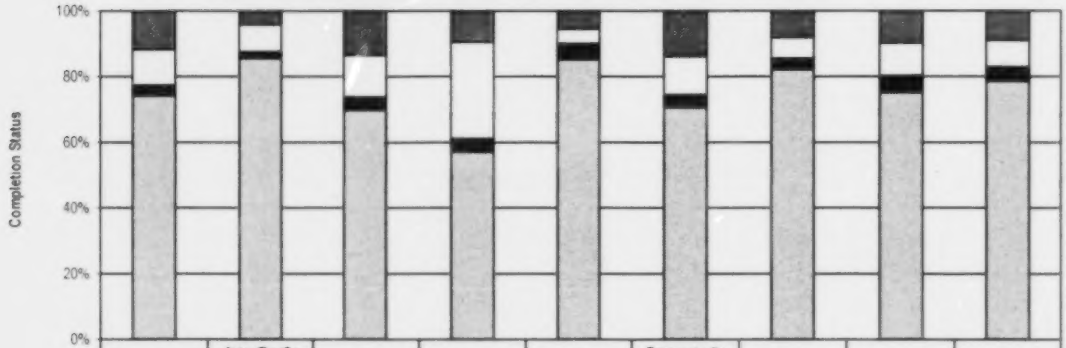
	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Female	Male	All Students
Dropped Out	11.6	4.2	13.1	6.6	4.9	13.1	7.8	9.1	8.5
Continued	10.6	6.3	12.8	6.8	4.2	11.8	6.1	9.9	8.0
Received GED	3.1	2.2	3.5	5.2	4.6	3.8	3.1	4.9	4.0
Graduated	74.7	87.4	70.6	81.4	86.2	71.3	83.0	76.1	79.5

Student Group, Gender, and All Students

Note: Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

The graduation rates for all student groups improved between 1998 and 1999 (see Figure 13 and Figure 14). Dropout rates for Hispanic and White students decreased by 0.3 and 0.6 percentage points, respectively, between the classes of 1998 and 1999. The dropout rate for African American students was steady, at 11.6 percent.

Figure 14.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates, Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1998



	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American*	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Female	Male	All Students
Dropped Out	11.6	4.1	13.4	9.4	5.5	13.8	8.0	9.7	8.9
Continued	11.0	8.3	12.8	29.4	4.4	11.7	6.3	10.1	8.2
Received GED	3.2	1.9	3.9	4.0	4.9	3.9	3.4	5.1	4.3
Graduated	74.2	85.8	69.8	57.2	85.3	70.6	82.2	75.2	78.7

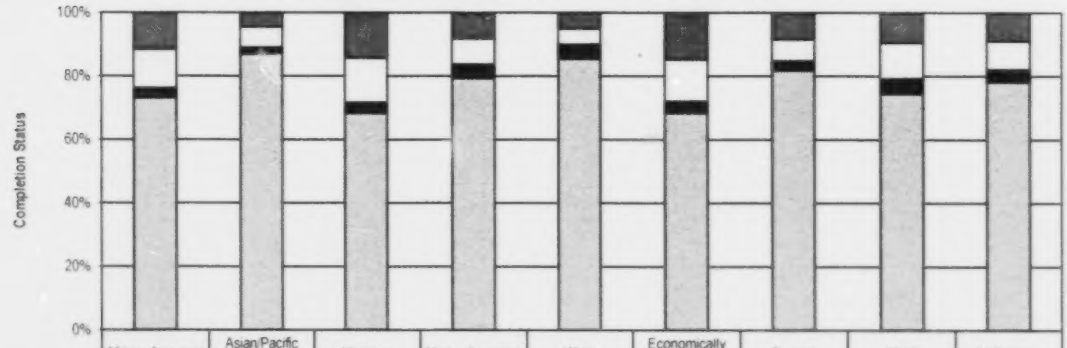
Student Group, Gender, and All Students

Note: Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

*The rates for Native American students shown include a distnct reporting error. The error distorted class of 1998 results because it was large relative to the number of Native American students in the cohort.

Asian American/Pacific Islanders and White student groups had the highest graduation rates whether Grade 9 (see Figure 13) or Grade 7 (see Figure 15) cohorts were tracked. Hispanics had the highest continuation and dropout rates based on both Grade 9 and Grade 7 cohorts.

Figure 15.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates, Grades 7-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1999



	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Female	Male	All Students
Dropped Out	11.7	4.6	14.3	8.3	5.1	14.8	8.5	9.6	9.0
Continued	12.0	6.4	14.0	8.0	4.9	13.1	6.7	11.2	8.9
Received GED	3.1	2.1	3.4	4.4	4.6	3.8	3.0	4.8	3.9
Graduated	73.2	86.9	68.3	79.3	85.5	68.4	81.8	74.5	78.1

Student Group, Gender, and All Students

Note: Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Rates by Student Characteristics and Program Participation. In addition to basic demographic groups, completion/student status rates were calculated for students with limited English proficiency and for students participating in special education and gifted/talented programs. Table H-9 in Appendix H shows the rates for these students in the class of 1999 Grade 9 cohort.

Attrition Rates

An attrition rate is the percentage change in enrollment between two grades. It provides a simple measure of school leavers when aggregate enrollment numbers are the only data available. For Grades 9-12, the rate is calculated by subtracting Grade 12 enrollment from Grade 9 enrollment four years earlier, and dividing by the Grade 9 enrollment.

The attrition rate does not take into account any of the reasons the beginning and ending enrollments are different. Therefore, there is no way to distinguish attrition that results from dropping out of school from attrition resulting from grade-level retention, students transferring to private schools, death, or early graduation. Grade 9-12 and Grade 7-12 attrition rates for 1999 are presented in Table 14 and Table 15, respectively. The rates were not adjusted for growth in student enrollment over the time period covered.

Table 14.
Enrollment and Attrition Rate, Grades 9-12,
by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1999

	Enrollment			
Student Group	Grade 9 1995-96	Grade 12 1998-99	Change	Attrition Rate, %
African American	50,461	28,295	22,166	43.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	7,281	7,060	221	3.0
Hispanic	127,134	66,491	60,643	47.7
Native American	797	885	-88	-11.0
White	150,146	110,042	40,104	26.7
Economically Disadvantaged	127,139	56,575	70,564	55.5
All Students	335,819	212,773	123,046	36.6

Note. Enrollment includes unmatched student identification records.

Table 15.
Enrollment and Attrition Rate, Grades 7-12,
by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1999

	Enrollment			
Student Group	Grade 7 1993-94	Grade 12 1998-99	Change	Attrition Rate, %
African American	41,079	28,295	12,784	31.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	6,054	7,060	-1,006	-16.6
Hispanic	99,863	66,491	33,372	33.4
Native American	620	885	-265	-42.7
White	138,932	110,042	28,890	20.8
Economically Disadvantaged	124,454	56,575	67,879	54.5
All Students	286,548	212,773	73,775	25.7

Note. Enrollment includes unmatched student identification records.

Reasons for Dropping Out and Dropout Prevention

Dropout Reasons

Districts can provide up to three out of sixteen exit reasons for a student who drops out, or indicate that the reason the student left was unknown or not provided. Out of 27,592 dropouts in Grades 7-12 in 1998-99, the reason for leaving school was reported as unknown for 46.0 percent (see Table 16). For 23.5 percent of dropouts, poor attendance was reported as the reason for dropping out.

Table 16.
Exit Reasons Reported for Official Dropouts, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Total		Gender, %		Student Group, %					
Reasons	Number	%	Male	Female	Af. Am.	Asian/ Pac. Is.	Hisp.	Nat. Am.	White	Econ. Disad.
Because of poor attendance	6,488	23.5	23.6	23.5	28.0	20.0	20.0	31.3	27.3	20.6
To pursue a job	2,299	8.3	10.7	5.5	5.4	9.0	9.9	6.0	7.4	8.2
Because of age	1,727	6.3	6.6	5.9	10.9	5.0	6.0	4.5	3.2	4.2
To enter an alternative education program (and not in compliance with compulsory attendance)	1,158	4.2	4.7	3.6	4.2	5.0	3.1	9.0	6.3	3.2
To enter an alternative education program that has no degree program	865	3.1	3.6	2.6	2.3	2.1	3.0	4.5	4.2	2.8
To get married	606	2.2	0.6	4.1	< 0.1	0.2	3.4	0.0	1.6	3.2
Because of pregnancy	503	1.8	< 0.1	4.0	1.0	0.2	2.2	1.5	1.8	2.2
Because of low grades	342	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.5	1.1	4.5	1.8	1.4
Because of failing the exit Texas Assessment of Academic Skills	309	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.9	1.1	0.0	0.7	1.4
Was expelled for reasons other than criminal behavior	222	0.8	1.1	0.4	1.1	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.9	0.7
Because of homelessness	181	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.9	0.4
Did not return after a JJAEP assignment	75	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.3
To join the military	63	0.2	0.4	< 0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.5	< 0.1
Because of drug abuse	35	0.1	0.2	< 0.1	< 0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
To enter college, but not a degree program	17	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	0.0	< 0.1	0.0	0.1	< 0.1
Because of language problems	10	< 0.1	< 0.1	< 0.1	0.0	0.2	< 0.1	0.0	0.0	< 0.1
No reason provided	12,692	46.0	45.2	46.9	42.7	54.5	48.6	38.8	42.8	51.2
Total	27,592	100	15,047	12,545	5,682	424	14,413	67	7,006	9,391

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

State Dropout Plan and Dropout Prevention Strategies

One of the objectives of public education set by the Texas Legislature is that "through enhanced dropout prevention efforts, all students will remain in school until they obtain a high school diploma" (TEC §4.001, 1999). Supporting legislation requires TEA to monitor and report dropout rates to the legislature and the public annually and specifies that dropout rates be included in the public school accountability system. In addition, TEA is required to project dropout rates (see TEA, 2000b). Under TEC §39.182 (1999), goals are set for future dropout rates, and a state plan to reduce future dropout rates is developed (TEA, 1996b).

Dropout prevention programs take many forms. They vary in terms of the populations targeted for services, the scope and kinds of services offered, and the service delivery mechanisms. Evaluations of dropout prevention programs have more often addressed the question "Did this program work?" rather than "Why did this program work?" (O'Sullivan, 1990; Paredes, 1996; Wilkinson & Griffith, 1994; and Wilkinson & Mangino, 1994). Nevertheless, some effective dropout prevention techniques have been identified.

- **Individualized instruction.** Individualized instruction in dropout prevention programs capitalizes on students' unique learning styles and interests and allows them to learn at their own pace and ability level.
- **Remediation and accelerated instruction.** Successful dropout prevention programs provide remedial instruction in basic academic skills or bring students up to grade level by the end of the program. Instruction may involve one-to-one tutoring, distance learning opportunities, or access to computer hardware and software. Vocational programs may be part of the instructional program.
- **Counseling and mentorship.** Dropout prevention counseling targets not only academic issues, but also social and survival skills, study skills, and employment skills. Counseling is geared to an individual student's needs and culture. One of the potentially effective strategies for a successful dropout prevention program is one-to-one involvement with a mentor. Mentors serve as role models by providing the necessary adult attention and support that will encourage the students to finish school and plan for the future.
- **Flexibility in programming and scheduling.** Dropout prevention programs serve diverse populations with diverse needs. Therefore, they are flexible about course sequences, course length, classroom structure, and class schedules. Programs may accommodate students' work schedules or other factors, and could involve evening, after school, and summer school options.
- **Trained and committed staff.** Successful dropout prevention programs are staffed by individuals who are committed to at-risk teens, have high expectations, and are dedicated to program plans and goals with specific time lines. Staff are also trained in tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs.
- **Parental involvement.** Parents play an important role in successful dropout prevention programs. They often act as mentors and tutors for the child and provide support to the teachers and school.
- **Collaboration with the community and businesses.** Successful dropout prevention programs collaborate with the community and local businesses. Developing company mentorship programs with at-risk students links the importance of graduation with future employment opportunities. This collaboration may also involve work-study, apprenticeship programs, and incentive programs.
- **Matching services to needs.** Successful dropout prevention programs work with other governmental agencies to assure students' access to appropriate social services for their immediate needs, so that students in turn can concentrate on finishing school. These services can range from accessing employment-related benefits to income assistance and day-care services for teenage parents.

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Appendix A.

Leaver Reasons Coded for 1997-98 and 1998-99 Leavers

Code	Leaver Reason	1997-98	1998-99
Completed High School Program			
01*	Graduated	197,186	203,393
19*	Completed graduation requirements except passing exit-level TAAS[a]	2,629	2,307
31*	Completed GED[b]	6,801	7,943
63*	Graduated previously, returned to school, left again	64	83
64*	Completed GED previously, returned to school, left again	843	572
Moved to Other Educational Setting			
28*	Intent to enroll in a public school in Texas	108,658	129,902
29*	Intent to enroll in a private school in Texas	6,896	7,815
73*	No intent but documented enrollment in a public school in Texas	26,777	19,543
74*	No intent but documented enrollment in a private school in Texas		868
07*	Intent to enroll in school out of state	29,597	34,807
06*	No intent but documented enrollment in school out of state	6,756	6,110
21*	Official transfer to another Texas public school district	5,812	6,471
22*	Alternative program working toward GED or diploma	17,851	19,772
72*	Alternative program by court order		281
70	Alternative program not in compliance with compulsory attendance	3,103	1,500
71	Alternative program not working toward GED or diploma		1,092
60*	Withdrew for home schooling	8,632	11,086
24*	Entered college early to pursue degree	332	441
25	Entered college but not pursuing degree	36	28
Withdrawn by District			
17*	Expelled for criminal behavior	668	520
26	Expelled for reasons other than criminal behavior	497	395
62*	Withdrawn for non-residence or falsified enrollment information	683	1,553
67*	Withdrawn for failure to provide immunization records	--	9
Other Reasons – School Related			
11	Withdrew/left school because of low or failing grades	515	474
12	Withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	9,007	8,310
13	Withdrew/left school because of language problems	11	14
27	Withdrew/left school because of TAAS failure	270	350
14	Withdrew/left school because of age	1,124	2,222
Other Reasons – Job Related			
02	Withdrew/left school to pursue a job	2,124	2,773
04	Withdrew/left school to join the military	79	89
Other Reasons – Family Related			
08	Withdrew/left school because of pregnancy	560	615
09	Withdrew/left school because of marriage	799	707
15	Withdrew/left school due to homelessness/non-permanent residency	131	250
66*	Removed from the district by Child Protective Services	395	722
Other Reasons			
03*	Student died	795	727
10	Withdrew/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problem	54	67
16*	Returned to home country	7,515	9,876
30*	Withdrew/left school to enter a health care facility	776	1,210
61*	Incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	5,329	5,163
65	Did not return to school after completing a JJAEP[c] term	96	127
99	Other (unknown or not listed)	19,809	18,193

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes. [a]Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. [b]General Educational Development. [c]Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program.

Appendix B.

Record Exclusions and Exit Reasons for Reported Leavers, After Dropout and Leaver Processing, 1997-98 and 1998-99

Reported Leavers and Exclusion or Exit Reason	1997-98		1998-99	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Reported Graduates	**197,186**	**41.7**	**203,393**	**40.1**
Leaver and Dropout Records Excluded	**133,292**	**28.2**	**158,285**	**31.2**
Reason for Record Exclusion:				
Found in Enrollment or Attendance	101,096	21.4	134,905	26.6
GED[a] Certificate	14,140	3.0	17,062	3.4
Graduate	1,339	0.3	1,988	0.4
Previous Dropout	1,954	0.4	1,608	0.3
ADA[b] Ineligible	508	0.1	459	0.1
Duplicate or Questionable Record	14,050	3.0	2,263	0.4
Qualified Leaver Reason (through 1997-98 only)	205	<0.1	NA[d]	
Official Other Leavers	**114,421**	**24.2**	**118,488**	**23.3**
Exit Reason Reported:				
Out-of-State Transfer	31,946	6.8	36,577	7.2
In-State Transfer	32,308	6.8	32,798	6.5
Alternative Program	12,473	2.6	14,512	2.9
Return to Home Country	6,879	1.5	9,393	1.8
Home School	6,997	1.5	9,259	1.8
Private School	5,494	1.2	6,704	1.3
Incarcerated Outside District	2,740	0.6	2,458	0.5
Completed Graduation Requirements, but Failed to Pass TAAS[c]	2,520	0.5	2,238	0.4
GED	2,155	0.5	1,656	0.3
Administrative Withdrawal	382	0.1	866	0.2
Deceased	727	0.2	697	0.1
Entered Health Care Facility	383	0.1	436	0.1
Entered College	268	0.1	367	0.1
Expelled for Criminal Behavior	397	0.1	314	0.1
Removed by Child Protective Services	131	<0.1	153	<0.1
Previous Graduate	58	<0.1	60	<0.1
GED program (unapproved)	8,563	1.8	NA[d]	
Official Dropouts	**27,550**	**5.8**	**27,592**	**5.4**
All Reported Leavers	**472,449**	**100.0**	**507,758**	**100.0**
Underreported Student Records	**67,281**		**21,432**	
Returning Students	**1,325,546**		**1,345,536**	

[a]General Educational Development. [b]Average Daily Attendance. [c]Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. [d]Not available because the code was discontinued.

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Appendix C.
Leaver Reason Codes and Documentation Requirements in the Public Education Information Management System

Introduction

Table C-1 on pages 54-62 provides an expanded definition and specific guidelines on acceptable documentation for each of the leaver reason codes listed in Code Table C162 of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) *2000-2001 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data Standards* (TEA, 2000c). The table is organized into the following broad categories of leavers:

- Completed High School Program
- Moved to Other Educational Setting
- Withdrawn by District
- Other Reasons (School Related, Job Related, Family Related, and Other)

Compulsory Attendance

Several leaver reason codes make reference to the compulsory attendance law (Texas Education Code [TEC] §§25.085–25.086, 1999). The compulsory attendance law requires students to attend school until they are 18 years old. Following are two exceptions to this basic law that are relevant to leaver reporting.

1. The student is at least 17 years old, is attending a General Educational Development (GED) preparation program, and one of the following four conditions has been met:
   - the student has the permission of their parent or guardian to attend the program;
   - the student is required by court order to attend the program;
   - the student has established a residence separate from their parent or guardian; or
   - the student is homeless.
2. The student is at least 16 years old, is attending a GED preparation program, and one of the following two conditions has been met:
   - the student is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the student under court order; or
   - the student is attending a Job Corps program.

Acceptable Documentation

General Guidelines

Acceptable documentation consists of either a documented request for transcript or a written signed statement from the parent or guardian. Students who are married (or 18 years or older) may sign their own statement. Acceptable documentation also includes verification by the superintendent or authorized representative that the child has been enrolled in a nonpublic school or another program or institution leading to the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate, has returned to their home country, is being home schooled, has enrolled in college in a program leading to an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, or has other similar circumstances.

Documentation must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district. The district should have a written policy stating who can act as an authorized representative for purposes of signing withdrawal forms and other leaver reason documentation.

Withdrawal forms completed by the parent/guardian or adult student should be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student as well as the district representative. Adult students include students who are 18 years old or older, students of any age who are married, and students who have established a separate residence from their parents or guardians.

An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student. Written documentation of oral statements made by the parent/guardian or adult student (in person or by telephone) is acceptable documentation in some situations if it is signed and dated by the district representative.

A statement by an adult neighbor or other adult (other than the parent/guardian or adult student) is allowed only to document a student returning to home country. In all other cases, the documentation must be provided by the parent/guardian or adult student, or an educational or other institution.

Documentation is required for dropout reason codes as well as other leaver reason codes. Documentation supporting use of a leaver reason code must exist in the district at the time the leaver data are submitted (no later than the mid-January PEIMS Submission 1 resubmission date).

Merits of leaver documentation are assessed at the time the documentation is requested during a data inquiry investigation. Determination of the acceptability of documentation is made by the professional staff conducting the investigation. These guidelines describe the most common types of documentation the investigator would expect to find supporting use of each leaver reason code. Other documentation that represents good business practice and shows a good faith effort on the part of the district to properly report leaver status will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Consideration will be given to different interpretations of documentation requirements followed by districts before these guidelines were released.

Intent to Enroll in Another School or Program

Intent to enroll elsewhere must be documented at the time the student withdraws or quits attending school – generally within 10 days of the last day the student attended school. If intent is not documented at that time, the district must acquire documentation that the student is enrolled elsewhere. For students who do not return to school in the fall after completing the prior school year, intent must be documented at the end of the prior school year.

Acceptable documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program is a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form), completed at the time the student quits attending school in the district, and signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate either where the family is moving, the name of the school the student will be attending, or that the student will be home schooled. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student.

A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student written at the time the student quits attending school in the district, stating that the student will enroll elsewhere or will be home schooled, is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student made at the time the student quits attending school in the district, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

Enrollment in Another School or Program

Acceptable documentation of enrollment in another school or educational program is a records request from the school or educational program in which the student is enrolled. Telephone requests must be documented in writing, including the date of the call, the name of the school requesting the records, the name of the person making the request, and the name of the person who received the call.

A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is enrolled in another school or program is also acceptable documentation. The letter must state the name and location of the school or program in which the student is enrolled, or that the student is being home schooled. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian or adult student providing the name and location of the school or program in which the student is enrolled, or stating that the student is being home schooled, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
Completed High School Program	
01* Student graduated	Use for students who meet all graduation requirements (which includes passing the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills [TAAS]) at any time during the prior school year, including the summer following the close of the prior year. To graduate a student must satisfy the requirements under 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 74, Subchapter B. Special education students must satisfy requirements under 19 TAC §89.1070. Students who complete a General Educational Development GED program are not reported as graduates. Students who complete all graduation requirements in one school year, but do not pass the exit-level TAAS until a later year, are reported as graduates in the year in which the TAAS test is passed. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.
19* Student failed exit TAAS, but has met all other graduation requirements	Use for students who completed all other graduation requirements but did not pass the exit-level TAAS before the end of the school year, and did not enroll in school the next year. If the student does enroll the next year, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits.
31* Student completed the GED, and district has acceptable documentation and student has not returned to school	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.
63* Student had graduated in a previous school year, returned to school, and then left again	This code may be used for students who graduated in the reporting district or from another district, state, or country. Students who graduate mid-year should be reported as graduates even if they return to school later in the same year. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Transcript showing sufficient credits, successful completion of TAAS, and a graduation seal.
64* Student had received a GED in a previous school year, returned to school to work toward the completion of a high school diploma, and then left	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the GED certificate or some other written document provided by the testing company showing completion of the GED.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
Moved to Other Educational Setting	
28* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in another **Texas public school district**	Student withdrawn from school and parent/guardian or adult student indicated at time of withdrawal that the student would be enrolling in another Texas public school district, ***including charter schools*** (code 28), a private school in Texas (code 29), or a public or private school outside Texas (code 07). The district may or may not receive a records request from the other school, and is not required to follow up with the school the parent/guardian or adult student indicated the student would be attending. This code should be used when the parent/guardian or adult student indicates at the time the student quits attending school that the intent is for the student to enroll elsewhere. If the student intends to enroll in another school in the district, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program.
29* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in **a private school within Texas**	
07* Student withdrew from school with **declared intent** to enroll in another public or private **school outside Texas**	
73* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in another **school district in Texas**	These codes would be used in the following situations: (1) The parent/guardian or adult student withdraws the student but does not indicate at that time that the student will be enrolling elsewhere. They may indicate some other reason for the student to be leaving school or not indicate any reason. However, the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student that the student is enrolled in another public school district in Texas, ***including charter schools*** (code 73); private school in Texas (code74); or public or private school outside Texas (code 6). (2) The student quits attending school without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student. (3) Student moves during the summer without withdrawing but the district receives a records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student. The district would change the original code assigned to the student, or add this code, when the records request or communication from the parent/guardian or adult student is received. If the original withdrawal date for the student is later than the date the student enrolled in the other school, the withdrawal date must be changed and all attendance accounting records affected by this change must be updated. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.
74* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in a **private school in Texas**	
06* Student withdrew from/left school with **no declared intent** to enroll elsewhere, but the district has received acceptable documentation of enrollment in another school district or private **school outside Texas**	
21* Student officially transferred to another Texas public school district through completion of ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1	Form ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1, is the official transfer form used when a student who lives in one school district transfers to a school in a neighboring school district. These transfers are approved by the superintendents of both districts; the students are coded with an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) eligibility code of 3 or 6 in the districts to which they transfer. This code should be used by districts that do not serve all grade levels for students in grades 7 or higher who have completed all grades offered in the home district and are being transferred to a neighboring district. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Required documentation is a copy of the ACC-041B, Transfers Prior to May 1, completed and signed by both superintendents or their authorized representatives.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
22* Student withdrew from/left school to attend an alternative program (GED, Job Training Partnership Act [JTPA] program, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws (Texas Education Code [TEC] §§25.085-25.086, 1999), and district has acceptable documentation that the student is working toward the completion of high school (diploma or GED certificate)	Use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy programs. If the student enrolls in one of these state-approved programs, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws (state approved programs will not accept students unless they are in compliance) and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED (this is the only option these state-approved programs offer). Also use for migrant students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in U.S. Department of Labor High School Equivalency Programs (HEP). If the student enrolls in a HEP, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED. Also use for students who are at least 16 years old and leave the district to enroll in Job Corps training programs. Job Corps is the only program in which 16 year olds can voluntarily enroll and still be in compliance with compulsory attendance laws. If the student enrolls in a Job Corps program, the district does not need to determine compliance with compulsory attendance laws and does not need to confirm that the student is working toward completion of the GED. Also use for students who are at least 17 years old and leave the district to enroll in programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs to work toward completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate. For alternative programs other than state-approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps programs the district must determine that the student is working toward a high school diploma or GED certificate because these programs may offer students other options such as job training. For 17 year old students, the district must also determine that the student meets one of three additional conditions of the compulsory attendance law: student has parent/guardian permission to attend the program, student has established a residence separate from the parent/guardian, or student is homeless. The district is not required to track the student's attendance or progress in the alternative program or to ascertain that the student actually obtains a high school diploma or GED certificate. Do not use for students 17 or younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program – use code 72. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. If the program is not a state approved Adult Education and Family Literacy, HEP, or Job Corps program, the documentation must indicate that the student is in compliance with the compulsory attendance law and is pursuing a high school diploma or GED certificate. Written documentation of an oral statement by a representative of the alternative program, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district, is acceptable.
70 Student withdrew from school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, HEP, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.) but is not in compliance with compulsory attendance laws	Use this code for students who leave the district to enroll in an alternative program but are not in compliance with the compulsory attendance law. The student may or may not be working toward a high school diploma or GED certificate. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student intends to or has enrolled in an alternative program.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
71 Student withdrew from school to attend an alternative program (GED, JTPA, trade school, drug rehabilitation program, etc.), is in compliance with compulsory attendance laws, but district does not have acceptable documentation that student is working toward completion of high school (diploma or GED certificate)	Use for students who are at least 18 years old and leave the district to enroll in alternative programs but are not working toward completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate. For example, a student who leaves the district to enroll in a job training program could be assigned leaver reason code 71. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or adult student) indicating that the student intends to or has enrolled in an alternative program.
72* Student was withdrawn from school by court order to attend a specific alternative program, is under compulsory attendance age, and district has a copy of the court order on file	Use for students 17 and younger who are court-ordered into an alternative program. The district is not required to confirm enrollment or attendance in the court-ordered program. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Copy of the court order.
60* Student withdrew at request of student, parent, guardian, or other person with legal control of the student for home schooling	Student withdrawn from or left school and parent/guardian or adult student indicates at time of withdrawal that the student will be home schooled or when contacted by district that the student is being home schooled. The district is not required to obtain evidence that the program being provided meets educational standards. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program.
24* Student withdrew from/left school to enter college with documentation that he or she is working towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree	This code is for students who leave secondary school to enter college early. It should be used for students who are enrolled full-time (at least nine credit hours per semester). ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. Documentation of enrollment in a college or university must indicate that the student is enrolled full-time in an academic program.
25 Student withdrew from/left school to enter college with no evidence of working towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree	This code can be used for students who enroll in college but do not meet the criteria described under code 24. For example, a student who enrolls in one electronics course at the local community college could be assigned leaver reason code 25. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student intends to enroll or has enrolled in college.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
Withdrawn by District	
78* Student was expelled for behavior qualifying as a Class C misdemeanor or worse (Code of Criminal Procedure), the behavior occurred on school property or at school-related functions, and failure to attend school results from either (1) adjudication for conduct that was delinquent or indicates a need for supervision per Section 51.03 of the Family Code, or (2) conviction of and sentencing for an offense under the Penal Code	This code is used for situations in which: • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007 (1999), and • the term of expulsion has not expired or the student's failure to attend school is due to court action. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.
79 Student was expelled for behavior qualifying as a Class C misdemeanor or worse (Code of Criminal Procedure), the behavior occurred on school property or at school-related functions, but failure to attend school is neither a result of (1) adjudication for conduct that was delinquent or indicates a need for supervision per Section 51.03 of the Family Code, nor (2) conviction of and sentencing for an offense under the Penal Code	This code is used for situations in which: • the student was expelled under the provisions of TEC §37.007 (1999), and • the term of expulsion has expired, and • the student's failure to attend school is not due to court action. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the expulsion.
26 Student was expelled (due to reasons other than criminal behavior), with no further participation in a school or educational program to continue working towards the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate	All expulsions are included in TEC §37.007 (1999). Refer to leaver reason codes 78 and 79.
62* Student was withdrawn by the district when it was discovered that the student was not a resident or had falsified enrollment information	***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the withdrawal.
67* Student was withdrawn from school after failing to provide immunization records within 30 days of enrollment	With few exceptions, students enrolling in Texas public schools must be immunized against specified contagious diseases. Under Texas Department of Health rules districts must provisionally admit students who have begun the required immunizations but may withdraw those who do not complete the immunizations within 30 days. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the withdrawal.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
76 Student age 18 or over, district revoked enrollment because student had more than five unexcused absences in a semester	A 1999 change to the compulsory attendance law (TEC §25.085, 1999) allows districts to revoke for the remainder of the school year the enrollment of a student age 18 or older who has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting the revocation.
Other Reasons	
School-Related Concerns	
11 Student withdrew from/left school because of low or failing grades	These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is because of low or failing grades (code 11), poor attendance (code 12), limited English proficiency (code 13), age (code 14), or TAAS failure (code 27). Whether the parent/guardian or student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes. These codes may also be assigned based on district review of the student's history of attendance and academic performance before leaving school. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or has left school because of low or failing grades (code 11), poor attendance (code 12), limited English proficiency (code 13), age (code 14), or TAAS failure (code 27).
12 Student withdrew from/left school because of poor attendance, enrollment not revoked by district	
13 Student withdrew from/left school because of language problems	
14 Student withdrew from/left school because of age	
27 Student failed exit TAAS, has not met all other graduation requirements, and has no evidence of further participation in a school or educational program to continue working towards the completion of a high school diploma or GED certificate	
Job-Related Concerns	
02 Student withdrew from/left school to pursue a job	These codes should be used if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the reason the student is leaving school or has left school is to pursue a job (code 02) or join the military (code 04). Whether the parent/guardian or adult student completes withdrawal papers or the student just stops coming to school is not relevant to assigning these codes. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school to pursue a job (code 02) or join the military (code 04).
04 Student withdrew from/left school to join the military	

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
Family-Related Concerns	
08 Student withdrew from/left school because of pregnancy	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy. This code should not be assigned based only on the fact that the student is pregnant at the time she leaves school. This code can be used for male or female students. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of pregnancy.
09 Student withdrew from/left school to marry	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage. The district is not required to confirm that the student is married. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of marriage.
15 Student withdrew from/left school due to homelessness or non-permanent residency	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school because of homelessness or non-permanent residency.
66* Student was removed from the district by Child Protective Services (CPS) and the district has not been informed of the student's current status or enrollment	This code applies only to Child Protective Services. Private agencies that provide asylum for students do not have the legal authority to remove students from school. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Due process documentation supporting this withdrawal.
Other Concerns	
03* Student died while enrolled in school or during the summer break after completing the prior school year	***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the death certificate or obituary.
10 Student withdrew from/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems	This code should be used only if the parent/guardian or student indicates verbally or in writing that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Student does not have to be admitted into a treatment program. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Any written documentation (including documentation of oral statements by the parent/guardian or adult student) indicating that the student is leaving school or left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
16* Student withdrew from/left school with documentation of having returned to home country, but with no evidence of enrollment in school in home country	Use for students whose families are leaving the United States. The citizenship of the student is not relevant in assigning this code. This code can also be used for foreign exchange students. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is a copy of the Transfer Document for Binational Migrant Student completed at the time the student withdraws from school, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district. Acceptable documentation is also a copy of the withdrawal form (or similar form) signed and dated by the parent/guardian or adult student (both signatures are not required) and an authorized representative of the school district (typically the withdrawing agent). The withdrawal form should indicate that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home country and should specify the destination. An original signature is not required on withdrawal forms received in the district by fax. Withdrawal forms received by e-mail do not need to be signed by the parent/guardian or adult student. A signed letter from the parent/guardian or adult student stating that the student is leaving school because the family is returning to the home county is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian, adult student, or other adult with knowledge of the family's whereabouts, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the school district.
30* Student withdrew from/left school to enter a health care facility	Health care facilities provide medical and/or rehabilitation services. They include hospitals, nursing homes, cancer treatment centers, burn centers, drug and rehabilitation facilities, and mental health treatment facilities. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students in health care facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted. Use this code for private health care facilities that provide their own educational programs. Also use for students who are entering a health care facility outside the district if the district does not know which school district will be providing educational services to the student. Use for students who are entering health care facilities outside Texas. ***Documentation Requirement:*** See requirements for documentation of intent to enroll in another school or program and requirements for documentation of enrollment in another school or program. These requirements also apply to students withdrawing from/leaving school to enter a health-care facility.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Table C-1.
Leaver Reason Codes in the Public Education Information Management System (cont.)

Leaver Code and Code Translation	Explanation/Clarification and Documentation Requirements
61* Student was incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	This code applies to juveniles as well as adult students incarcerated in facilities such as juvenile detention centers or jails outside the boundaries of the district. In Texas, school districts are required to serve students incarcerated in facilities located within the boundaries of the district. If the student is being served by the district, a leaver record is not submitted. Do not use this code for students who are placed in a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). If the student is enrolled in a JJAEP, a leaver record is not submitted. ***Documentation Requirement:*** Acceptable documentation is written documentation from the facility in which the student is incarcerated. A signed statement from the parent providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated is also acceptable documentation. Other acceptable documentation is written documentation of an oral statement by the parent/guardian providing the name and location of the facility in which the student is incarcerated, signed and dated by an authorized representative of the district.
65 Student did not return to school after completing a JJAEP term, and the student has not graduated or completed/received a GED	Do not use this code for students who enroll in another school district or private school after completing a JJAEP term.
99 Other (reason unknown or not listed above)	This code is used for students who are withdrawn by the school district after a period of time because they have quit attending school and their reason for leaving is not known. It is also used for students who withdrew from/left school for reasons not listed above.

* School leavers coded with this leaver reason code are not included in the calculation of the dropout rate used for accountability purposes.

Appendix D.
Dropout Data Collection and Reporting in Texas and Other States

	Data Collection			Type of Rate					Student Groups			Public Reports			
	Unit of Collection	Grades Included	NCES Definition	Annual Dropout Rate	Longitudinal Dropout Rate	Completion	Graduation	Attrition	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Socioeconomic Status	State	District/County	School	Used in Accountability System
Alabama	student	9-12	X	X	projected				X	X		X	X	X	no
Arizona	school	7-12		X			X		X	X		X	X	X	no
California	district	9-12	X	X	projected		X		X	X		X	X		no
Colorado	district	7-12		X		X	X		X	X		X	X		no
Florida	student	9-12		X			X		X	X		X	X	X	yes
Georgia	district	6-12		X		X	X					X	X	X	no
Illinois	district	9-12	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	no
Indiana	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X		yes
Kentucky	district	9-12	X	X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
Louisiana	student	7-12	X	X								X	X	X	yes
Maryland	district	9-12		X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
Massachusetts	district	9-12	X	X	projected				X	X		X	X	X	no
Michigan	district	9-12		X		X	estimated					X	X	X	no
Minnesota	student	7-12	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		no
Missouri	district	9-12		X			X		X			X	X		no
New Jersey	student	16+ yrs		X					X	X		X	X	X	yes
New York	district	9-12	X	X								X	X	X	no
North Carolina	district	9-12		X								X	X		no
Ohio	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X		yes
Pennsylvania	district	7-12	X	X	(2001)				X	X		X	X	X	no
Tennessee	district	9-12	X	X	X				X	X		X	X		yes
Texas	**student**	**7-12**		**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**yes**
Virginia	district	7-12		X			X		X	X		X	X		no
Washington	student	9-12		X			X					X	X		no
Wisconsin	district	7-12	X	X			X					X	X	X	no

Notes for Appendix D

Data Collection

Unit of Collection. How are data collected by the education agency – student level or aggregated to the school, district, or county level?

Grades Included. What grades are included in the data collection?

NCES Definition. Does the agency use the National Center for Education Statistics definition of a dropout?

Type of Rate

Annual Dropout Rate. Does the agency report an annual dropout rate?

Longitudinal Dropout Rate. Does the agency report a longitudinal dropout rate?

Completion. Does the agency report a completion rate?

Graduation. Does the agency report a graduation rate?

Attrition. Does the agency report an attrition rate?

Student Groups

Race Ethnicity. Does the agency disaggregate information by race/ethnicity?

Gender. Does the agency disaggregate information by gender?

Socioeconomic Status. Does the agency disaggregate information by socioeconomic status?

Public Reports

State. Does the agency report a state dropout rate?

District/County. Does the agency report dropout rates by school district or county?

School. Does the agency report dropout rates by school/campus?

Used in Accountability System. Is the dropout rate used in a system to rate school or district performance?

State Website Addresses

Alabama	http://www.alsde.edu/
Arizona	http://ade.state.az.us/
California	http://goldmine.cde.ca.gov/
Colorado	http://www.cde.state.co.us/
Florida	http://www.firn.edu/doe/
Georgia	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/index.asp
Illinois	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/
Indiana	http://www.doe.state.in.us/
Kentucky	http://www.kde.state.ky.us/
Louisiana	http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp
Maryland	http://www.msde.state.md.us/
Massachusetts	http://www.doe.mass.edu/
Michigan	http://www.mde.state.mi.us/
Minnesota	http://www.educ.state.mn.us/
Missouri	http://services.dese.state.mo.us/
New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/education/
New York	http://www.nysed.gov/
North Carolina	http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/
Ohio	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/
Pennsylvania	http://www.state.pa.us/PAPower/
Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/education/homepage.htm
Texas	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/
Virginia	http://www.pen.k12.va.us/
Washington	http://www.k12.wa.us/
Wisconsin	http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/

Appendix E.

Comparison of Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Dropout Rate and Grade 9-12 Attrition Rate, 1998-99

Students in the Attrition Rate Who Are Not Counted as Dropouts in the Longitudinal Rate

Graduates: The attrition rate includes early graduates and any on-time graduates who were not enrolled in Grade 12 in the fall of 1998-99.

GED: The attrition rate includes students who received a GED certificate rather than a high school diploma.

Continuing Students: The attrition rate includes continuing students if they were not in Grade 12 in 1998-99. The most common reason for students to fall behind a grade level is retention in Grade 9.

Transfers Out: The attrition rate includes all students who transferred out of Texas public schools or left for any reason. The longitudinal rate excludes transfers and students who left Texas public schools for reasons other than dropping out. Exclusions from the longitudinal rate include:

- Enroll in another educational setting (public school, private school, alternative school leading to a diploma or GED certificate, home schooling, or entered college early in Texas or out of state)
- Withdraw with intent to enroll elsewhere
- Returned to home country
- Removed by district (expelled for criminal behavior, falsified enrollment information, no immunization, etc.)
- Entered health care facility or incarcerated outside district
- Removed by Child Protective Services
- Died
- Destination not reported to TEA by school districts (before 1997-98)

Transfers In and Growth: Some attrition rates include a growth adjustment that is an estimate of the number of students transferring into Texas public schools. The attrition rate calculated by TEA is not adjusted for growth. The longitudinal rate assigns all transfers in to the appropriate cohort and determines outcomes in the same way that outcomes for starting Grade 9 students are determined.

Students Previously Counted: The 1999 attrition rate includes students from the class of 1998 who were repeating Grade 9 in 1995-96. These students were also included in the 1998 attrition rate.

Data Errors: The attrition rate includes students removed from the longitudinal calculation because their status cannot be determined due to data errors.

Grade 9-12 Attrition Rate
Students from the class of 1999 who for any reason were not enrolled in Grade 12 in a Texas public school in the fall of the 1998-99 school year

Students Included in Both the Longitudinal Dropout Rate and the Attrition Rate

Both the longitudinal dropout rate and the attrition rate include students in the class of 1999 who left school before graduation for the following reasons:

- Academic performance (poor attendance, low grades, failing TAAS, etc.)
- Employment (pursue job or join military)
- Family (marriage or pregnancy)
- Alternative education (not leading to a diploma or GED certificate)
- Discipline (failure to return following expulsion or JJAEP term)
- Alcohol or other drug abuse problems
- Whereabouts unknown

Dropouts in the Longitudinal Rate Who Are Not Included in the Attrition Rate

The longitudinal dropout rate includes the following students who are excluded from the attrition rate:

- *Grade 12 Dropouts:* The attrition rate does not include students who enroll in Grade 12 in 1998-99 but drop out before graduating.
- *Military District and Charter School Dropouts:* The attrition rate does not include students who drop out from districts located on military bases or charter schools.

Grade 9-12 Longitudinal Dropout Rate
Students from the class of 1999 who dropped out under the accountability dropout definition

Table E-1.
Reconciliation of the Texas Education Agency Attrition and Longitudinal Dropout Counts, Grades 9-12, Texas Public Schools, 1999

Attrition count[a]	123,375
Longitudinal dropout count	20,231
Difference in counts	**103,144**

Sources of differences in counts: The longitudinal dropout and attrition counts differ in three primary ways: (1) in determining the final status of students; (2) in defining the initial cohorts; and (3) in counting transfers in and out of the public school system.

	Plus	Minus	Difference
Final Status			**36,494**
• Graduates before 1999 not enrolled in Grade 12 in the fall of 1998	6,849		
• 1998-99 graduates not enrolled in Grade 12 in the fall of 1998	9,897		
• General Educational Development certificate recipients not enrolled in Grade 12 in the fall of 1998	8,491		
• Students continuing school, but not in Grade 12 by the fall of 1998	13,694		
• 1998-99 dropouts who were enrolled in Grade 12 in the fall of 1998		2,437	
Cohorts			**34,361**
• The attrition count begins with all students enrolled in Grade 9, including those repeating Grade 9. The longitudinal count assigns each student to one and only one cohort, so only first-time Grade 9 students are counted.	51,939		
• The attrition count ends with all students in Grade 12, regardless of when they began Grade 9. The longitudinal count includes only those Grade 12 students who began Grade 9 with the cohort.		17,578	
Transfers and Growth			**32,734**
• An attrition rate may include a growth factor; that is, an estimate of students transferring into the Texas public school system. Students transferring out are included in the attrition count itself.	0[b]		
• The longitudinal cohort counts and adds transfers-in on grade level.		59,728	
• Students leaving the public school system for any reason other than dropping out are subtracted from the longitudinal dropout count.	92,462		
Errors in Student Records and Data Anomalies			**-445**
• To track students from year to year in the longitudinal rate requires that students have valid identification records. Students with errors that prevent tracking have to be excluded from the cohort. The attrition rate uses aggregate counts and so includes records of Grade 9 students who cannot be tracked.	5,607		
• Grade 12 enrollment for the attrition count includes students with identification errors. The longitudinal count excludes them.		5,367	
• It is not possible to place all students records in one or the other count, or both, because the decision rules and counts are based on different types of student data records.		685	
All Differences			**103,144**

[a]Enrollment in Grade 9 in the fall of the 1995-96 school year minus enrollment in Grade 12 in the fall of the 1998-99 school year.
[b]The Texas Education Agency does not include a growth factor in the attrition calculation.

Appendix F.
Dropout Policy in Texas

Current concerns over at-risk behavior and dropping out of school can be traced to the education reform movement of the early 1980's (Roderick, 1993). In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* deplored the condition of education in the United States (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). A year later, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 72, which mandated sweeping reforms in the state's public education system. The bill, among other changes, increased graduation requirements, established a minimum competency testing program with an exit-level test for graduation, prohibited social promotion, limited the number of permissible absences, and linked participation in extracurricular activities to academic standards with a "no pass/no play" policy.

HB 72 also addressed high school dropouts. The legislation authorized TEA to implement a system for collecting data on student dropouts and to begin developing a program to reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to no more than 5 percent (TEC §11.205, 1986). At the same time, the bill directed the Texas Department of Community Affairs (TDCA) to assess the state's dropout problem and its effect on the Texas economy. Under contract with TDCA, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted much of the research, known as the Texas School Dropout Survey Project, and presented a report to the 69th Legislature (IDRA, 1986).

IDRA estimated that a third of Texas students dropped out before completing high school. The dropout rates for African Americans and Hispanics were notably higher than that for White students. The reasons most frequently cited by students for leaving school included failing grades, excessive absences, marriage and pregnancy, and financial difficulties at home. Few Texas school districts reported having dropout prevention programs, and fewer still had evaluation data for those programs. Finally, the report estimated that losses in potential earnings and tax revenues to the state for each cohort of dropouts were substantial.

Alarmed by the magnitude of the dropout problem in Texas and questioning the effectiveness of existing reform efforts to help students at risk of dropping out, the legislature passed HB 1010 in 1987 (Frazer, Nichols, & Wilkinson, 1991). HB 1010 substantially increased state and local responsibilities for collecting student dropout information, monitoring dropout rates, and providing dropout reduction services (TEC §§11.205-11.207, 1988). TEA was required to establish a statewide dropout information clearinghouse and to form, along with eight other state agencies, an interagency council to coordinate policies and resources for dropouts and at-risk students. A definition of a dropout was added to statute. In addition, the agency was directed to produce biennial reports for the legislature presenting a broad range of statewide dropout statistics and a systematic plan to reduce dropout rates for all segments of the student population. HB 1010 also required school districts to designate one or more at-risk coordinators and to provide remedial and support programs for students at risk of dropping out of school.

In conjunction with these legislative initiatives, the State Board of Education (SBOE) took action in 1987 to increase the "holding power" of Texas schools. The board amended the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) to require that districts adopt policies outlining academic options available to students at risk of dropping out (19 TAC §75.195). Under the rule, each school district was directed to have in place, by September 1, 1988, a plan designed to identify potential dropouts and help them stay in school. A student in Grades 7-12 was identified as "at risk" if he or she met one or more of the following conditions (19 TAC §75.195):

- the student had been retained one or more times in Grades 1-6 based on academic achievement and remained unable to master the essential elements at the current grade level;
- the student was two or more years below grade level in reading or mathematics;
- the student had failed at least two courses in one or more semesters and was not expected to graduate within four years of entering ninth grade; or

- the student had failed one or more of the reading, writing, or mathematics sections of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), beginning with the seventh grade.

In addition to these criteria, specified in statute, the board rules permitted school districts to consider any environmental, familial, economic, social, developmental, or other psychosocial factors that may have contributed to a student's inability to progress academically.

Also in 1987, the SBOE adopted the first long-range plan for Texas public school education (SBOE, 1987). Calling at-risk students one of the focal points of the four-year plan, the board affirmed its commitment to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and other students. The plan called for programs to reduce the dropout rate and encourage higher attendance. Dropout reduction has been a component of each subsequent long-range plan adopted by the SBOE (1991, 1995, 2000).

In 1989, the 71st Legislature passed a number of bills focused on dropouts and at-risk students. Under HB 850, known as the driver's license law, an individual under the age of 18, who had neither graduated from high school nor obtained a General Educational Development certificate (GED), could not receive a license to drive unless he or she: (a) was enrolled in school and had attended at least 80 days the previous semester; or (b) had been enrolled for at least 45 days in a high school equivalency program.

Senate Bill (SB) 152 directed the SBOE to set an annual dropout rate target for Texas that would reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to 5 percent by 1997-98. Districts in which 100 or more students dropped out and those in which 5 percent or more of the students were identified as being at risk were required to prepare a dropout reduction plan. Each year, districts exceeding the state target dropout rate were required to allocate a percentage of their compensatory education funds to remedial and support programs for at-risk students.

Senate Bill 1668 expanded the criteria for identifying at-risk students to include prekindergarten through Grade 6. It also authorized the SBOE to adopt rules under which school districts could use community-based dropout recovery education programs to provide alternative education for at-risk youths. In addition, the bill directed school districts to notify the parents of eligible children about prekindergarten programs offered. Finally, SB 1668 required TEA and the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse to assist regional education service centers in establishing substance abuse prevention and intervention programs in the public schools.

SB 417 contained several provisions related to dropout prevention and reduction. The age at which a student must begin school was lowered from seven to six, and the compulsory attendance age was raised from 16 to 17. The five-day absence rule enacted in HB 72 was replaced with a requirement that a student attend class at least 80 days per semester to receive course credit. SB 417 also added to the criteria for school district accreditation a measure of the effectiveness of district dropout prevention and recovery programs.

For dropouts under the age of 19 who returned to school, a "second chance" program was created through the Office of the Governor. The program offered rewards for graduating, ranging from tuition credits for higher education to various employment opportunities. Finally, SB 417 established a number of pilot programs for at-risk students, including: programs aimed at early intervention for students in prekindergarten through the elementary grade levels; school-age parenting and pregnancy programs; education and involvement programs for parents of at-risk youths; and a program to prepare at-risk students to earn high school equivalency certificates.

In 1993, the legislature again expanded the list of at-risk criteria, this time to address student pregnancy and parenthood. When the Texas Education Code was readopted in 1995, the definition of a dropout was eliminated. SBOE authority to promulgate rules regarding at-risk classification and dropouts was also repealed. The definition of a dropout in the TAC and provisions that allowed school districts to consider risk factors other than those identified in statute were subsequently repealed by the SBOE. Thereafter, school districts were restricted to statutory criteria when reporting numbers of students identified as at

risk through the state's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The *PEIMS Data Standards* (cf. TEA, 2000c) provided the operational definition of a dropout.

The legislature also removed the requirement that districts prepare separate dropout reduction plans. Local dropout reduction efforts were included in district and campus improvement plans (TEC §§11.252-11.253, 1996). Districts were still obligated to provide compensatory and accelerated instruction to students who were at risk of dropping out of school (TEC §29.081, 1996).

At the state level, the goals of reducing the cross-sectional and longitudinal dropout rates to 5 percent were readopted, as were the requirements that TEA report dropout data collected from school districts and publish a state plan to reduce the dropout rate (TEC §§39.181-39.185, 1996). Dropout statistics were required to be reported annually as part of comprehensive biennial and interim reports to the legislature. Language referring to a state dropout information clearinghouse and interagency task force was not included in the revised code.

In 1997, the compulsory attendance age was again raised, requiring a student to attend school until his or her 18th birthday. A number of bills passed in 1999 by the 76th Legislature focused on dropout prevention. Standards were adopted for community-based dropout recovery education programs. Also, money was made available to school districts to create special programs for Grade 9 students who were not expected to meet the academic requirements to advance to Grade 10 and for after-school programs for middle-school-age students. Other programs targeted preschool and the early elementary grades.

Appendix G.
History of Texas Education Agency Dropout Definition

A dropout was defined in law in 1987 as a student in Grades 7-12 who does not hold a high school diploma or the equivalent and who is absent from school for 30 or more consecutive days with no evidence of being enrolled in another public or private school (Texas Education Code [TEC] §11.205, 1988). As implemented by the State Board of Education, students with an approved excuse were excluded from the dropout definition, as were students who returned to school the following semester or school year (19 Texas Administrative Code [TAC] §61.64, 1988). This definition is operationalized in the *Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data Standards* (cf. TEA, 2000c). The first PEIMS dropout records were submitted for students dropping out during the 1987-88 school year.

The original dropout definition in the *1988-89 PEIMS Data Standards* did not count as dropouts students who received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate because the GED testing program was developed as a means of objectively certifying whether an individual had educational development equivalent to that of a high school graduate. Students who transferred to other educational settings leading to a high school diploma, GED certificate, or college degree were also excluded. Students who withdrew to enter health care facilities and those incarcerated in correctional facilities were also not included in the dropout definition.

Beginning with the 1992-93 dropout rate, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) searched dropout data for prior years to identify previously reported dropouts. These repeat dropouts were removed from the dropout count for the current year. Also beginning in 1992-93, students expelled for committing certain types of criminal behavior on school property or at school-related events were removed from the dropout count if the term of expulsion had not expired. In 1999, Senate Bill (SB) 103 amended the accountability statute to exclude all expelled students from the dropout count during the term of expulsion.

Legislative direction given at the time the revised Texas Education Code was adopted in 1995 indicated that, in deleting the dropout definition from code, it was intended that students who meet all graduation requirements but do not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills not be counted as dropouts. Also beginning that year, students who withdraw from school to return to their home countries are not counted as dropouts, even if the district does not have evidence that the students have re-enrolled in school.

When the age of compulsory attendance was raised from 16 to 17 in 1989, an exemption was added for students who are at least 17 years old and enrolled in a GED preparation program. In 1999, SB 1472 added an exemption for students who are at least 16 and enrolled in a Job Corps program. Table G-1 on page 72 shows the evolution of the TEA dropout definition.

Table G-1.
Chronology of Texas Education Agency Dropout Definition and Data Processing Enhancements

Year	Dropout Definition	Data Processing
1987-88	A dropout is defined in the Texas Education Code, Texas Administrative Code, and *Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data Standards* as a student in Grades 7-12 who does not hold a high school diploma or the equivalent and is absent from school for 30 or more consecutive days. Students with an approved excuse or documented transfer are excluded from the dropout definition, as are students who return to school the following semester or year.	The Texas Education Agency (TEA) begins collecting individual student-level records for students who drop out of school.
1990-91		TEA begins collecting individual student-level enrollment records and graduate records. An automated search of enrollment records is instituted, and reported dropouts found to be enrolled in another Texas public school district the following year are removed from the dropout count.
1992-93	Students previously counted as a dropout, back to 1990-91, are removed from the dropout count. Students expelled for committing certain types of criminal behavior on school property or at school-related events are removed from the dropout count during the term of expulsion.	TEA begins collecting individual student-level attendance records. An automated search of attendance records is instituted, and reported dropouts found to be in attendance in another Texas public school district later in the year are removed from the dropout count. An automated search of graduate records and General Educational Development (GED) certificate records is instituted, and reported dropouts found to have graduated or received a GED are removed from the dropout count.
1994-95	The definition of a dropout is removed from state law and State Board of Education rule. Students who meet all graduation requirements but fail the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) are removed from the dropout count. Students who return to their home countries are excluded from the dropout count even if there is no evidence that they have re-enrolled in school.	
1995-96	Students who enroll in alternative programs that are not state approved but that meet certain criteria are removed from the dropout count.	
1997-98		TEA begins collecting individual student-level records for all school leavers — graduates, dropouts, and students who left school for other reasons. Additional audits of dropout rates calculated from these data are conducted at the state level.
1998-99		The automated search of enrollment records is expanded to include students who return to school in the fall but leave before the PEIMS snapshot date or do not return until after the PEIMS snapshot date.
1999-00	Sixteen-year-olds enrolled in Job Corps programs leading to a high school equivalency certificate are removed from the dropout count. The circumstances under which expelled students are excluded from the dropout count are expanded in statute to cover students expelled for any reason.	

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Table H-1.
Number of Students in Attendance and Dropouts, by Grade, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Grades 7-12
Students	315,126	312,470	376,422	288,371	246,075	234,653	1,773,117
Percentage of All Students in Grades 7-12	17.8	17.6	21.2	16.3	13.9	13.2	100
Dropouts	939	1,767	7,659	5,497	5,014	6,716	27,592
Percentage of All Dropouts in Grades 7-12	3.4	6.4	27.8	19.9	18.2	24.3	100

Table H-2.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Gender, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Male		Female	
Grade Level	Number	Rate, %	Number	Rate, %
Grade 7	463	0.3	476	0.3
Grade 8	848	0.5	919	0.6
Grade 9	4,207	2.1	3,452	2.0
Grade 10	3,084	2.1	2,413	1.7
Grade 11	2,797	2.3	2,217	1.8
Grade 12	3,648	3.1	3,068	2.6
Grades 7-12	15,047	1.6	12,545	1.5

Table H-3.
Students, Dropouts, and Annual Dropout Rate, by Student Group and Grade, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

		Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Dropout Rate, %
Grade 7	African American	44,822	14.2	185	19.7	0.4
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7,652	2.4	15	1.6	0.2
	Hispanic	117,655	37.3	535	57.0	0.5
	Native American	932	0.3	3	0.3	0.3
	White	144,065	45.7	201	21.4	0.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	137,010	43.5	420	44.7	0.3
	All Students	315,126	100	939	100	0.3
Grade 8	African American	43,561	13.9	272	15.4	0.6
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7,756	2.5	33	1.9	0.4
	Hispanic	114,056	36.5	1,085	61.4	1.0
	Native American	854	0.3	4	0.2	0.5
	White	146,243	46.8	373	21.1	0.3
	Economically Disadvantaged	126,160	40.4	885	50.1	0.7
	All Students	312,470	100	1,767	100	0.6
Grade 9	African American	55,989	14.9	1,547	20.2	2.8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	8,898	2.4	93	1.2	1.0
	Hispanic	149,843	39.8	4,535	59.2	3.0
	Native American	1,029	0.3	15	0.2	1.5
	White	160,663	42.7	1,469	19.2	0.9
	Economically Disadvantaged	137,746	36.6	2,979	38.9	2.2
	All Students	376,422	100	7,659	100	2.0
Grade 10	African American	39,881	13.8	998	18.2	2.5
	Asian/Pacific Islander	8,454	2.9	76	1.4	0.9
	Hispanic	100,291	34.8	2,930	53.3	2.9
	Native American	922	0.3	12	0.2	1.3
	White	138,823	48.1	1,481	26.9	1.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	89,856	31.2	2,002	36.4	2.2
	All Students	288,371	100	5,497	100	1.9
Grade 11	African American	32,019	13.0	964	19.2	3.0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7,720	3.1	79	1.6	1.0
	Hispanic	80,145	32.6	2,331	46.5	2.9
	Native American	812	0.3	18	0.4	2.2
	White	125,379	51.0	1,622	32.3	1.3
	Economically Disadvantaged	67,509	27.4	1,541	30.7	2.3
	All Students	246,075	100	5,014	100	2.0
Grade 12	African American	32,476	13.8	1,716	25.6	5.3
	Asian/Pacific Islander	7,282	3.1	128	1.9	1.8
	Hispanic	76,051	32.4	2,997	44.6	3.9
	Native American	743	0.3	15	0.2	2.0
	White	118,101	50.3	1,860	27.7	1.6
	Economically Disadvantaged	58,439	24.9	1,564	23.3	2.7
	All Students	234,653	100	6,716	100	2.9

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Table H-4.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Age, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
September 1 Age					
10	44	< 0.1	0	0.0	0.0
11	6121	0.3	33	0.1	0.5
12	245,999	13.9	428	1.6	0.2
13	299,265	16.9	974	3.5	0.3
14	298,472	16.8	1,521	5.5	0.5
15	299,559	16.9	2,969	10.8	1.0
16	289,595	16.3	5,640	20.4	1.9
17	246,805	13.9	8,100	29.4	3.3
18	66,440	3.7	5,170	18.7	7.8
19	14,815	0.8	1,953	7.1	13.2
20	4,609	0.3	728	2.6	15.8
21	1,132	0.1	55	0.2	4.9

Table H-5.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Program Participation, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
Bilingual/English as a Second Language	84,629	4.8	1,713	6.2	2.0
Gifted/Talented	178,383	10.1	242	0.9	0.1
Special Education	237,379	13.4	4,325	15.7	1.8
Title I	453,819	25.6	4,535	16.4	1.0

Table H-6.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Characteristic, Texas Public Schools, 1998-99

	Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
At Risk	585,442	33.0	10,444	37.9	1.8
Limited English Proficient	105,840	6.0	2,114	7.7	2.0
Migrant	27,137	1.5	466	1.7	1.7
Overage/Not on Grade	522,041	29.4	21,458	77.8	4.1

Table H-7.
Students, Dropouts, and Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1987-88 Through 1998-99

		Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
1987-88	African American	194,373	14.3	16,364	17.9	8.4
	Hispanic	396,411	29.1	34,911	38.2	8.8
	White	744,254	54.6	38,305	42.0	5.1
	Other	28,160	2.1	1,727	1.9	6.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	All Students	1,363,198	100	91,307	100	6.7
1988-89	African American	193,299	14.2	14,525	17.6	7.5
	Hispanic	412,904	30.4	33,456	40.6	8.1
	White	724,622	53.3	32,921	40.0	4.5
	Other	29,290	2.2	1,423	1.7	4.9
	Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	All Students	1,360,115	100	82,325	100	6.1
1989-90	African American	192,802	14.2	13,012	18.6	6.7
	Hispanic	427,032	31.4	30,857	44.1	7.2
	White	711,264	52.2	24,854	35.5	3.5
	Other	30,396	2.2	1,317	1.9	4.3
	Economically Disadvantaged	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	All Students	1,361,494	100	70,040	100	5.1
1990-91	African American	192,504	14.0	9,318	17.3	4.8
	Hispanic	444,246	32.4	24,728	45.8	5.6
	White	703,813	51.3	18,922	35.1	2.7
	Other	32,075	2.3	997	1.8	3.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	399,025	29.1	14,755	27.3	3.7
	All Students	1,372,738	100	53,965	100	3.9
1991-92	African American	196,915	14.0	9,370	17.5	4.8
	Hispanic	462,587	32.9	25,320	47.4	5.5
	White	712,858	50.7	17,745	33.2	2.5
	Other	34,478	2.5	985	1.8	2.9
	Economically Disadvantaged	442,139	31.4	15,614	29.2	3.5
	All Students	1,406,838	100	53,420	100	3.8
1992-93	African American	216,741	14.1	7,840	18.1	3.6
	Hispanic	516,212	33.7	21,512	49.6	4.2
	White	760,143	49.6	13,236	30.5	1.7
	Other	40,101	2.6	814	1.9	2.0
	Economically Disadvantaged	463,452	30.2	13,515	31.1	2.9
	All Students	1,533,198	100	43,402	100	2.8
1993-94	African American	221,013	14.0	7,090	17.6	3.2
	Hispanic	537,594	34.1	20,851	51.9	3.9
	White	775,361	49.2	11,558	28.7	1.5
	Other	42,047	2.7	712	1.8	1.7
	Economically Disadvantaged	502,494	31.9	13,537	33.7	2.7
	All Students	1,576,015	100	40,211	100	2.6
1994-95	African American	227,684	14.1	5,130	17.1	2.3
	Hispanic	556,684	34.4	14,928	49.9	2.7
	White	789,481	48.8	9,367	31.3	1.2
	Other	43,673	2.7	493	1.6	1.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	535,480	33.1	10,176	34.0	1.9
	All Students	1,617,522	100	29,918	100	1.8
1995-96	African American	234,175	14.1	5,397	18.5	2.3
	Hispanic	580,041	34.9	14,649	50.2	2.5
	White	802,509	48.3	8,639	29.6	1.1
	Other	45,853	2.8	522	1.8	1.1
	Economically Disadvantaged	555,318	33.4	9,608	32.9	1.7
	All Students	1,662,578	100	29,207	100	1.8

Note. Parts may not add to100 percent because of rounding or missing student data.

Table H-7 (cont.)
Students, Dropouts, and Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1987-88 Through 1998-99

		Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
1996-97	African American	240,142	14.1	4,737	17.6	2.0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	43,314	2.5	330	1.2	0.8
	Hispanic	603,067	35.4	13,859	51.5	2.3
	Native American	4,274	0.3	81	0.3	1.9
	White	815,175	47.8	7,894	29.3	1.0
	Economically Disadvantaged	595,036	34.9	9,393	34.9	1.6
	All Students	1,705,972	100	26,901	100	1.6
1997-98	African American	244,987	14.1	5,152	18.7	2.1
	Asian/Pacific Islander	45,169	2.6	420	1.5	0.9
	Hispanic	619,855	35.6	14,127	51.3	2.3
	Native American	4,468	0.3	117	0.4	2.6
	White	828,660	47.5	7,734	28.1	0.9
	Economically Disadvantaged	626,080	35.9	9,911	36.0	1.6
	All Students	1,743,139	100	27,550	100	1.6
1998-99	African American	248,748	14.0	5,682	20.6	2.3
	Asian/Pacific Islander	47,762	2.7	424	1.5	0.9
	Hispanic	638,041	36.0	14,413	52.2	2.3
	Native American	5,292	0.3	67	0.2	1.3
	White	833,274	47.0	7,006	25.4	0.8
	Economically Disadvantaged	616,720	34.8	9,391	34.0	1.5
	All Students	1,773,117	100	27,592	100	1.6

Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or missing student data.

Table H-8.
Annual Dropout Rate, Grades 9-12, by Student Group, Texas Public Schools, 1997-98 and 1998-99

	Number of Students	Percent of All Students, %	Number of Dropouts	Percent of All Dropouts, %	Annual Dropout Rate, %
1997-98					
African American	158,745	14.1	4,616	18.9	2.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	30,157	2.7	367	1.5	1.2
Hispanic	394,619	35.1	12,368	50.7	3.1
Native American	2,840	0.3	99	0.4	3.5
White	538,630	47.9	6,964	28.5	1.3
Economically Disadvantaged	357,724	31.8	8,313	34.1	2.3
Female	546,238	48.6	11,175	45.8	2.0
Male	578,753	51.4	13,239	54.2	2.3
All Students	1,124,991	100	24,414	100	2.2
1998-99					
African American	160,460	14.0	5,225	21.0	3.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	32,359	2.8	376	1.5	1.2
Hispanic	406,533	35.5	12,793	51.4	3.1
Native American	3,508	0.3	60	0.2	1.7
White	543,050	47.4	6,432	25.8	1.2
Economically Disadvantaged	353,724	30.9	8,086	32.5	2.3
Female	555,830	48.5	11,150	44.8	2.0
Male	590,080	51.5	13,736	55.2	2.3
All Students	1,145,910	100	24,886	100	2.2

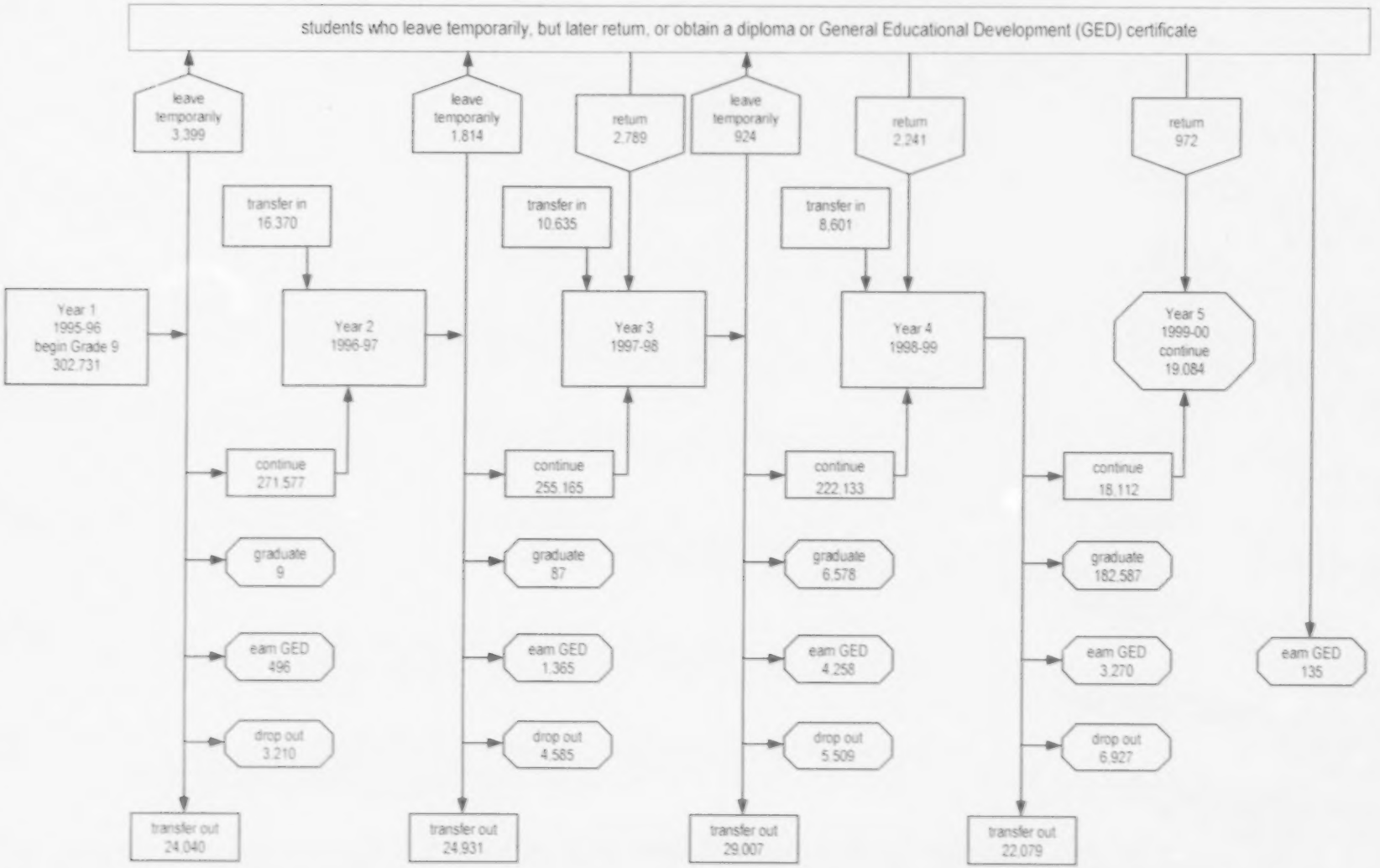
Note. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Table H-9.
Longitudinal Completion/Student Status Rates, Grades 9-12, by Student Characteristic/Program Participation, Texas Public Schools, Class of 1999

	Graduated		Received GED		Continued		Dropped Out	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Gifted/Talented	24,678	97.1	248	1.0	262	1.0	215	0.8
Limited English Proficient	4,695	49.7	218	2.3	1,845	19.5	2,692	28.5
Special Education	18,086	69.6	658	2.5	4,116	15.8	3,133	12.1

Notes. Parts may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. Student characteristics and program participation were assigned based on the year of a student's final status in the cohort.

Appendix I.
Synopsis of Student Progress Through High School, Class of 1999



Note. ⬭ indicates final student statuses.

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Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

1. acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;
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3. nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;
4. nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;
5. enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
6. nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and
7. evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

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